The Oracles of God

William T. Hanzsche

Presented
By
Dr. Zeno Wall

Earl Wall. Porter,
First Baptist Church,
Shelby. N.C.
Dec. 3. 1938

Gardner Webb College Library

THE ORACLES OF GOD

The Oracles of God

A Modern Interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets

By

WILLIAM THOMSON HANZSCHE, M.A., D.D.

Pastor, Prospect Street Presbyterian Church, Trenton, N. J.;
Author, "The Great Themes of Jesus"

With Introduction by

MATHER ALMON ABBOTT, M.A., Ph.D.
Head Master, Lawrenceville School

NEW YORK CHICAGO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

BS
1505
H25

1927

Copyright, MCMXXIX, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 851 Cass Street
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 99 George Street

INTRODUCTION

AS Head Master of Lawrenceville School, I have for the past six years undertaken all the Bible teaching in the institution. Contrary to the custom of our fathers, the modern generation do not seem to have had the attention, spiritually, of their parents to which we of the older régime were subject. It is a sad fact that many boys go out into life with but a meagre knowledge of the sacred Scriptures. In their young days they have never had the stimulus of those fascinating moments by the fireside when the mother of the family told the dear old tales that have had such marked influence on men's lives.

To find a suitable book to help one in expounding the Sacred Word is a great difficulty. Books of the kind there are in hundreds, but I have found few of them suited to my purpose. It was with great delight, therefore, that I finished the reading of Dr. Hanzsche's manuscript on the Prophets. How he was able to boil down so much matter in so few words is incomprehensible to me, but he has done it. His word pictures are very cleverly drawn, and the way in which he brings the teachings of the seers to modern-day conditions is most surprising and helpful.

It is just exactly the book on the Prophets that the teacher needs. Taking Dr. Hanzsche's texts as an

outline, it would be a pretty sorry teacher indeed who could not make his recitations attractive.

I am looking forward to the publishing of this book, not only because the text is a great help to me personally, but because through it I see a way of presenting the teaching of the Prophets, to the youth under me, which I have never before believed possible. For to youth the Prophets are not interesting, and any help which will contribute to making the Bible an every-day affair, and connecting it with the life of the modern generation, cannot be overestimated in its far-reaching power. So I welcome *The Oracles of God.*

MATHER A. ABBOTT.

Lawrenceville School,
Lawrenceville, N. J.

CONTENTS

I.	The Prophets and Their World	9
II.	Amos, the Thundering Sheep Herder	14
III.	Hosea, the Deserted Husband	19
IV.	Micah, the Champion of the Common People	25
V.	Isaiah, the Determined Diplomat	31
VI.	Jeremiah, the Persecuted Emancipator	41
VII.	Nahum, the Messenger of Vengeance	48
VIII.	Habakkuk, the Man of Faith	51
IX.	Zephaniah, the Prophet of a World War	58
X.	Ezekiel, the Actor in Exile	64
XI.	Obadiah, the Prophet of Retribution	73
XII.	Daniel, the Voice of Religious Conviction	77
XIII.	Haggai, the Temple Builder	83
XIV.	Zechariah, the Prophet of Reconstruction	87
XV.	Malachi, the Moulder of True Religion	92
XVI.	Joel, the Poet Revivalist	97
XVII.	Jonah, the Unwilling Missionary	102
XVIII.	Job, the Discoverer of God in Human Suffering	108

"We, who, craven in our prayer,
We lay off on Thee our care—
Lay, instead, on us Thy load;
On our minds Thy spirit's goad,
On our laggard wills Thy whips,
And Thy passion on our lips!

"Fill us with the reasoned faith
That the prophet lies who sayeth
All this web of destiny,
Torn and tangled, cannot be
Newly woved and redesigned
By the Godward human mind."

—ANONYMOUS.

I

THE PROPHETS AND THEIR WORLD

THE comings of the Old Testament prophets were not frequent. Beginning with Elijah and Elisha, the careers of these old-time spokesmen of the Lord were scattered over a period of six or seven hundred years, extending from 880 B. C. to somewhere around 200 B. C. or later. Four of the greatest of the prophets—Amos and Hosea in Israel, the north, and Isaiah and Micah in Judah, the south—were centered in one period, from 750 to 690 B. C.

They came in times of great stress when men could not understand the significance of things in the maelstrom of events. They came from all walks of life to surrender themselves to God; and because they were unique and different, men shunned them and scorned them, held them up to ridicule and derision, imprisoned them, and put them to death. Years after their death newer generations revived their memory, understood the truth of their sayings, and canonized them.

With the exception of the two earlier prophets, Elijah and Elisha, of whose words we have no immediate record, and who come to us vaguely out of a legendary past, no miraculous deeds are connected

with the names of the prophets. They were human folks, who walked along human ways, with mortal powers and capacities; but their eyes were focused to see God in human events and their ears were attuned to hear His word. So plain did the truths of human life become to them that they were naively innocent of human logic and said of their messages: "Thus saith the Lord."

They were distinctly and refreshingly non-theological, eminently practical; and they refused to use either the hashed-over expressions of tradition, or the religious shibboleths of the past. Religion to them was not a mere matter of creeds, but of deeds; not mental only, but experimental; not a thing of the ascetic's cell, or of the philosopher's chamber, but of the palace of pleasure, the politician's council, the storekeeper's scales, the mart of trade, and the street.

The prophets used every available means to bring religious truths before the minds of men. They had no fear of being too sensational, but they did dread a religion that was humdrum, dry, dusty, without the virility, and the vigour, and the zest of actual life. And conscious of their limitations, at the cost of their lives, they pointed with varying emphasis to the future appearance of one who would be *The Great Prophet*.

They were not predicters, declarers of the future; but they were discoverers, revealers of the present. They were not foretellers; they were forth-tellers.

Most of them left collections of writings, or messages, prepared either by their own hands, or by the hand of some scribe, or secretary. The literary form

of these messages is unique. The Jew has always been dramatically inclined; yet all the ancient peoples had theatres in the midst of their social life except the Jew, who put his dramatic genius into his religious literature. In the prophetic books we find, therefore, drama, and essay and lyric song, rhapsodies, funeral dirges, and emblem and symbol prophecy, unknown in any other literature, and unrevealed in the prosaic, verse by verse translation of our common English text. We can never catch the power of the books of the prophets until we grasp the gripping literary form into which even the jumbled fragments have been moulded.

But the words of the prophets have endured, not because of their sparkling literary style, but because they contain principles of eternal living which solve the common problems of human nature in every age with equal efficacy—problems of wealth and poverty, of justice and oppression, of greed, selfishness, political corruption and business dishonesty, of hate and of war. In the words of the Great Prophet: "It is the truth which makes men free." The words of the prophets crackle with the truth in such a way that they ignite men and communities with the divine sparks of new mental and moral freedom.

As Belgium lay between rival warlike powers of our modern day, so little Palestine was nestled, an inevitable battleground, between the giant forces of the ancient world. On the main highway, the connecting link between Egypt, the ancient seat of culture and

wealth, and the newer and more vigorous nations to the north and east, Judah—the southern Jewish nation—found herself in a perpetual dilemma. She was always trying to decide on which side of the balance of power to throw her puny strength, while the prophets were ever striving to make their people see that in righteousness and in the ways of God alone lay security.

The ministry of Amos and of Hosea in the northern Jewish kingdom lay in those critical days when Assyria, a new world power, was threatening to conquer Damascus, Israel's neighbour and foe, and all of Palestine. Samaria, capital of the northern Jewish kingdom, fell about ten years after the close of the ministry of Hosea.

Meanwhile, in the southern capital, Jerusalem, Isaiah, during a long period from 736 to 691 B. C., watched the marching forces of Assyria strike towards Egypt, and cried his warnings to his southern countrymen. Micah, the prophet of the poor, was contemporary with Isaiah, in the north.

In 720 B. C. Assyria defeated Egypt at the battle of Raphia, and, ever after, the power of Egypt was never unchallenged by the newer nations. Isaiah administered to his people during days of invasion.

Zephaniah and Nahum were prophetic messengers in Jerusalem during the days of attempted religious reform under King Josiah.

Jeremiah's pathetic ministry, begun about sixty-six years after the death of Isaiah, endured through the period of Jerusalem's invasion and final fall. Ha-

bakkuk and Obadiah were contemporary. Ezekiel was the prophetic exile in Babylon when Jerusalem fell, and during the sad years immediately following; and Daniel, and the so-called second Isaiah, were captives with Ezekiel on the Chebar canal.

Jerusalem was finally razed about 586 B. C. About fifty years later migrations of Jews were permitted to come back to Palestine when the Persians mastered the Babylonians. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were prophets of the rebuilding era in Jerusalem.

Somewhere in these after years of a restored but exceedingly local Jerusalem, the book of Jonah, the prophecy of Joel, and the throbbing drama of Job were written.

"You followed, through the quest of life,
The light that shines above
The tumult and the toil of men,
And shows us what to love.
Right loyal to the best you knew,
Reality or dream,
You ran the race, you fought the fight,
A follower of the Gleam.

"We lay upon your folded hands
The wreath of asphodel;
We speak above your peaceful face
The tender word—Farewell!
For well you fare, in God's good care,
Somewhere within the blue,
And know, to-day, your dearest dreams
Are true,—and true,—and true!"

—HENRY VAN DYKE.[1]

[1] Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

II

AMOS, THE THUNDERING SHEEP HERDER

" For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

—MATTHEW 5: 20.

SOUTHERN JUDAH was the " wild west," the rough, grazing country, of Palestine of the eighth century before Christ. There, among the sheep and the wild fruit trees, away from the glamour and glitter of the city Amos grew into vigorous manhood. Read Amos 1: 1. He learned to know the stars by name and, out among the great silences of the solemn hills, to become aware of the presence of God in human life. Read 5: 8 and 9.

He travelled into the distant northern cities with his flocks and herds, and there he listened to the news of the day and closely observed the sinister social life. He developed a character as rugged as the mountains he loved and a frankness and truthfulness born of long meditation and converse with God. Read 7: 14–15, 3: 7–8 and 7: 9.

He came to know God as omnipotent, in all and over all; and from the premise that God is righteous,

he concluded that social injustice leads man to his own ruin. He believed God to be the supreme governor of peoples and nations, and that nations as well as individuals will surely be punished for their sins. Amos believed that the practiced world philosophy that might makes right brings doom, that whatsoever a nation sows it must reap, and that every nation must pay the penalty for its deeds.

Read the political situation of Amos' day in II Kings, chapters 10 and 13. See also II Kings 13: 23–25 and II Kings 14: 23–28.

It was a day of luxury, extravagance and ease.

On a principal street-intersection of Samaria one high day, near the great Temple where the fashionably overdressed worshippers were parading their faithfulness, this great stalwart, picturesque man of the cattle country began to call down the curses of Jehovah upon the bitterest enemies of that people. In the day when there were no magazines, or newspapers, or telegraphs, or radios, one can imagine what a sensation he created. The very mysterious strangeness of the man combined with his virile tones to lure men to him. He literally stopped all traffic at the streets, and captured the cheers of the multitudes as he denounced Israel's most hated foes. For seven consecutive days he thundered forth his fiery words while the arteries of trade were paralyzed with interest. Each succeeding day the crowds were larger, the curiosity more intense. And each succeeding day he condemned a nation nearer home. On the seventh day he brought the curses of God against Judah, the old rival on the south. And

on the eighth day, when the whole city stood gaping at his feet to discover who would be the next nation to be cursed, Amos drove home his message: "Woe unto thee, Israel!" Deep into their hearts he burned the searing words of judgment. Read 1: 3 through 2: 8.

The blunt shepherd from the hills used his own homely expressions to picture the conditions of social, political and religious life. Imagine the sensation which resulted when he called the society leaders "cows," jaws eternally moving, and pleasures wholly animal! A nation is largely what its women are (4: 1–3). He ironically described the landholders, so anxious to increase their possessions that they scraped the dust off a poor man's head for more land (2:6–7 and 2: 15).

He condemned the social sins which usually accompany prosperity and luxury—greed, avarice, love of splendour, opulence, ease, the grinding of the poor, impurity, immorality and social injustice. Read 2: 6–8; 3: 9–15; 5: 10–12; 6: 1–2. Social injustice and impurity always breed decay.

Political sins endangered the nation (5: 7–12 and chapter 6).

And worst of all, religious sins were rife. Folks went to church that they might have a good reputation, and forgot that religion is primarily a matter of service (4: 4–5 and 5: 21–24). The people did not want the truth (5: 10 and 7: 10–17). Unless life was changed doom was inevitable (3: 11–12). Chapter 5: 2–13 is written in the form of a funeral dirge,

chanted by Amos in professional style before the holiday crowds at the sanctuary.

Amos' appeals are in three great climaxes (4: 12; 5: 4; and 5: 14). Like overripe fruit, a civilization built on luxury decays from within (8: 1); yet Jehovah still stands at the altar ready to redeem His people (chapter 9).

The prophet had his eyes open to the immediate needs of his luxury-loving age. In the midst of the vaunted prosperity he discovered pagan ideals, deteriorating moral standards, hypocrisy and immorality, and a dangerous and defiant spirit of self-sufficiency. He did not attack the wealthy because they were wealthy, but because they misused their wealth; and he did not champion the poor because they were poor, but because they were oppressed. It is personal sin which spells the collapse of any civilization.

We need the booming message of Amos to-day with its thunderlike crack of doom upon us. There has been a vast lowering of our moral standards since the war, until we are not merely in danger of becoming *im*moral, but *un*moral, never questioning the rightness or wrongness of our acts. We boast of our vast prosperity, and glory in our material possessions, but we fail to see that "to be better off is not necessarily to be better." We shall never secure sound progress in our modern social life until we have a profound sense of individual responsibility. New laws, new methods of government, conferences, conventions and educational fads cannot solve our social problems; we need to realize the obvious fact that the chief responsibility

for most of our economic, political and social distress lies with the individual citizen. The only way to make life secure and to avoid calamity is the way of character. The state is as strong as its individual citizens are pure and sincere.

QUESTIONS

Do you see any parallel between the social conditions of ancient Israel and modern America?
Is prosperity always an unmixed blessing?
What is Amos' answer to the statement that religion ought to have its own sphere and not interfere with business and politics?
Are America's greatest foes within her or without her?
How can we best strengthen America?

"What builds the nation's pillars high
And its foundations strong?
What makes it mighty to defy
The foes that round it throng?

"Not gold, but only men can make
A people great and strong,
Men who, for truth and honour's sake,
Stand fast and suffer long.

"Brave men who work while others sleep,
Who dare while others fly,
They build a nation's pillars deep,
And lift them to the sky."

—EMERSON.

12/5/38

III

HOSEA, THE DESERTED HUSBAND

"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."
—JOHN 6: 37.

HOSEA, a thoughtful, meditative, brooding young man of the north, had heard the thundering voice of Amos, the foreigner, denounce the sins of his people, and the stern message of the man of the plains to the gaily apparelled, chattering, superficial worshippers at Bethel had gone down deep into the soul of this cultured, refined young native. He came to pass through a bitter experience as a living parable to his people. Read Hosea 1: 1–4.

Hosea began where Amos left off. Married to a woman of the loose morals so common in that day, he called his firstborn child Jezreel, to portray his own vivid sense of expected doom. Read II Kings 9: 24; Hosea 1: 5.

As the months went by the ugly gossip of the neighbourhood compelled Hosea to suspect his wife of immorality, and when the second child was born he named it One Who Never Knew a Father's Pity (1: 6–7). A third child was born, and the evidence of immorality was conclusive (1: 8–9). His wife left the home and sank into unspeakable sin, while Hosea cared for the three children. For Hosea loved his wife, and even her great sin could not blast his love. Yearning

for her to change her life, he followed her about, plaintively and wistfully seeking her return. But Gomer, the wife, flaunted her sin in the face of her faithful, devoted, deeply wounded and troubled husband. Read 1: 6–9.

And now Hosea began to catch vistas of meaning in this living parable through which he could embody his personal sorrow in his country's weal (chapter 2). It was the common belief of the Semites that God was a sort of a husband, an Adonai, a Master, of His people. Read 2: 19–20 and Revelation 22: 17. Through his bitter, agonizing experience Hosea began to comprehend the long, tragic story of God's love for men.

He made one more effort to win back his wife. He bought her at auction for the price of a common slave, and brought her back to his home and kept her in a separate room (3: 1–5). Discipline was necessary before repentance and forgiveness could come.

Submerging his own suffering in his country's need, Hosea appeared one day on an improvised platform before a great crowd of perfunctory worshippers and, with quivering sensitiveness of soul, told all the details of the family scandal to the gossip-loving multitudes. All the pent-up Jewish ire against a woman gone wrong burst forth when the husband cried: "What shall I do with Gomer, my wife?" And when the multitude had pronounced sentence Hosea thundered upon them: "Ye are as Gomer. God was your first beloved, your husband, and ye have left Him and sold yourselves to gods of gold and silver, of money,

of pleasure, of lust and of power. Ye are spiritual adulteresses" (chapter 2). They had broken the heart of God. But Hosea had discovered that, having loved his wife, he loved her to the end, that discipline was necessary for repentance, and that, when repentance had come, there was no joy like the joy of reconciliation.

When once an outdoor Oriental oven (7: 4) was heated to full capacity the baker could leave it unattended, for the heat would do its own work. So corruption reaches a point when it spreads itself. Read 7: 8. Men live a life one side of which is overdone religiously, cindery, theologically dry, sapless, while on the other side the week-day world of business and politics is sodden, mouldy, flabby, totally untouched by the fires of true religion.

Hosea warned of two judgments. There is the danger of the quiet, gnawing, cancerlike rotting away (5: 12) of a man's character of which he is not aware. There is the danger of the sudden pounce of collapse (5: 14).

A man has in his own power the choice of making or marring his life. He may live on in careless selfishness, in open indulgence, in denial of God, until the time comes when his will loses its power. In this world of boundless love and measureless joy he walks through life desolate, deserted, loveless, miserable.

And yet God still waits for such prodigals even after they have lost the power to take the first step towards home. He loves us to the brink of judgment. Chapters 2 to 14 are outbursts from the heart of God.

In 14: 1–3 Israel speaks. In 14: 4–7 Jehovah speaks. Even after judgment God will save a remnant.

For ten years or more Hosea gave his life efforts to his people in the midst of changing conditions and shifting scenes. Read II Kings 15. Amos got his message from observation; Hosea from inner experience. Amos saw the sweep of history; Hosea saw only his own community. Amos spoke the stern, unrelenting word of God's broken law; Hosea pleaded for God's broken heart. Hosea saw society as an organism, a single life, and religion not merely as a comfortable commodity, but as the vital energy of life. He sounded the first great evangelical note in religion, as he made it a thing of love rather than a thing of law.

He saw men neglect the way of love. He watched kings rise and fall, bloodshed and lawlessness become rampant, and he saw the dust stir on the frontiers as the war horses of the enemy began to gallop. Read 2: 9; 2: 16; chapter 4; 5: 1–7; 6: 1–11.

If men had only caught Hosea's conception of religion as a thing of love we would have been spared the inquisitions, the controversies and many of the bloody wars of life. Read 7: 1–8; 8: 1–11; 9: 1–9.

God is not the enemy of men who sin. Although He hates sin, no sin can change His love for men. The more we sin, the more He pities us. He does not seek to punish us, He seeks to save us from the agony of our sins; and if we but give Him a chance His love will master our sin.

What our machine-moulded world of to-day most needs is the consciousness of the personal love of an

interested God, and the realization that sin is not merely a social mistake or a physiological weakness but a deliberate, painful ignoring of the love of God. We need to substitute conscience for complexes, love for legality, God for glands. Failing to use love, we lose it, and become hard, cynical, beyond redemption, as long as we refuse to love. And there is no greater hell than a lonely, loveless life, the self-inflicted nemesis of neglect. There is no greater heaven than the life which, despite its past, discovers the boundless, forgiving love of God and gives itself in vibrant response to the love of its fellows.

QUESTIONS

How close did Hosea come to Jesus' conception of God?
Which do we need more to-day—Amos' message of broken law, or Hosea's message of broken love?
How far is Hosea 4: 6 an explanation of the juvenile crime of our day?
Would you call the World War the judgment of the lion on the modern nations?
Do you see any judgment of the moth in American life to-day?

"When Jesus came to Golgotha they hanged Him on a tree,
They drave great nails through hands and feet, and made a Calvary;
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were His wounds, and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.

"When Jesus came to Birmingham, they simply passed
Him by,
They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die;
For men had grown more tender, and they would not
give Him pain;
They only just passed down the street, and left Him
in the rain.

"Still Jesus cried, 'Forgive them, for they know not what
they do,'
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched Him
through and through;
The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul
to see,
And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for
Calvary."

—G. STUDDERT-KENNEDY.

IV

MICAH, THE CHAMPION OF THE COMMON PEOPLE

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

—MATTHEW 6: 24.

MICAH was a country lad, born and raised not far from the little town out of which Amos had gone northward to thunder his message to Samaria and to which he had come back broken and aged. One can imagine the little lad, Micah, listening with open-mouthed wonder as the shepherds told him of Amos, their own hero. Micah reflects the message and the work of Amos.

Men vividly referred to Micah one hundred years later. Read Micah 1: 1, and Jeremiah 26: 19–20. From his great influence and his religious name, "who is like unto Jehovah," we may conclude that this simple, peasant prophet held a unique place in the minds of his countrymen for many generations. Somehow men will listen with profound respect, even though not always with agreement, to the champion of the common people.

Living amid want and squalor, work and suffering, and seeing beyond him the opulence, ease and excess of the cities, Micah felt keenly the economic caste

system, the social injustice, and the grinding oppression of the underprivileged. In these things he saw the handwriting of doom. Unlike his contemporary in Jerusalem, Isaiah, he did not touch upon political problems.

He was a fearless, rugged, far-seeing herald of judgment, the first prophet to decree the destruction of Jerusalem. The city had lured away the finest of the country boys and girls, and had despoiled them body and soul. The rich of the city, living off of swollen profits, wasted in their excess more than the poor could eke out for their necessities, swayed the courts, dominated the laws, and contaminated the politics of the land. All the honest, sincere anger of the long oppressed Russian peasant, of the pathetic Mexican peon, of the dweller of our slums, beaten and bruised by the injustices of life, the pained victim of the caste of big business and gang corruption, speak here through Micah.

Read chapters 1 to 3. Compare 1: 2–4 with Psalm 29. In 1: 5–7 Jehovah speaks. In 1: 8–16 Micah speaks. There is a symbolic action here similar to the symbolism in the tales of Homer. There is an exuberance of emotional language, and the usual Oriental play on words at the time of great tenseness. Compare Matthew 16: 17–18: "Thou art Petros, and on this *petra* I build my church." Micah 1: 10: "Tell it not in Telltown, weep it not in Weeptown; in the Place of Dust I roll myself in the dust." It is as if some southern prophet, describing an army approaching down the Atlantic seaboard, should say: "Print it not

in Princeton, bawl it not in Baltimore; in Washington our might will be washed away."

The reasons for the coming judgment are not to be found merely in the gaudy fashions and the intrigues and scandals of society, but in the prevalent luxury, the shifting and shiftless politics and the greed which puts the making of money above the love of one's fellows. Those who profited by the *status quo* defended it with unctuous manner and sanctimonious look. When men devise schemes to oppress others the very success of their plans reacts on the schemers. It is the story of the French revolution, of the Russian revolution, of Mexico, of China—and who shall say that it does not apply to us? Micah fought a relentless warfare for justice and the square deal. There can be only one result from economic oppression—captivity, at the hands of the foe (1: 16).

Micah's reply to the leaders (read 2: 1–12 and 3: 1–8) is in 3: 9–12. "The heads judge for reward, the priests teach for hire, the prophets divine for money." Chapter 6 contains the heart of the social teachings of the Old Testament. In 6: 1–5 the Lord speaks; in 6: 6–7 the people speak; in 6: 8 the mountains speak. After a tender appeal to the childhood history of this people, the mountains poetically burst forth with one of the noblest definitions of religion ever given: "To do justly, to love kindness, to walk humbly with God."

Perhaps we, in "the land of the free," where men are supposed to be free and equal, do not feel the need of Micah's message. To-day over half our population

lives in cities, and big business is absorbing commerce. The average income of those gainfully occupied in 1926 was estimated at over $2,010, while the average for the entire population was only $770. Our gross income in 1926 was 43 per cent. greater than in 1921. Since the war the number of millionaires has grown out of all proportion until, in 1926, there were over 207 families with incomes in excess of a million a year. The income of these few families exceeded the total yearly income of 574,000 people of average income. The year 1927 reported a 600 per cent. increase in millionaires over 1923. According to Professor Irving Fisher, of Yale, ninety million people, or four-fifths of our population, make only a little more than expenses, and are able to save nothing. In 1924 it was shown that the rich 2 per cent. of the people owned 60 per cent. of the wealth, and the poor 65 per cent. owned only 5 per cent. of the wealth. There are more than 35,000 millionaires in the United States; 200 or more have taxable incomes of a million a year or over; many others with yearly income of a million or more have untaxable resources.

Investigation of the buildings trades, in which workmen are highly paid, showed that for each dollar spent on a new house, labour got twenty-seven cents, materials cost twenty-five cents, a portion of which went to labour which supplied the materials, and promotions and commissions cost forty-eight cents.

Our standardized universal education has invited mental slavery; for " the nation has become literate by reading the same books and singing the same songs."

With the increased amount of time given us we read all the distorted news of the world; the murders, scandals, deeds of degeneracy, and sex lore confessions occupy our time on literature and on the stage. " In the last war there were regiments of poor, stunted devils, syphilitic, tubercular, crooked in body, incapable of anything but menial work—the grandchildren of the factory slaves of Dickens' day. What will the grandchildren of the tabloid readers be like? Healthy of body, perhaps . . . not poor . . . but with their emotions and ideals either wrought into fantastic shape, or burnt out altogether—soiled minds, rotten before they are ripe."

Our religion cannot be confined to temples and buildings; it must dominate and sway life as a whole, or else the poison of the few will permeate into the body politic. The passion to get rich by trickery and criminal disregard of the rights of others will breed the same spirit in others; for hate breeds hate.

Micah demands social justice, unadulterated manhood, trust in God. Then, and then only, can disintegration be averted. Read chapter 7. " He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot and thou wilt cast all our sins into the midst of the sea."

Any other way but God's way is the way of calamity.

QUESTIONS

Do you consider the tendency to form monopolies a Christian or a non-Christian way to do business? Why?

What corrective has religion for the desire to get rich quickly without honest effort?

What must be a Christian's attitude towards greed and graft in politics, injustice and false dealing in business?

Can religion countenance any league with vice, even if the league makes money for those in it?

What is the Christian attitude towards the making and using of money?

"God give us men whose aim will be,
Not to defend some ancient creed,
But to live out the laws of right
In every thought and word and deed.

"God send us men alert, and quick
His lofty precepts to translate
Until the laws of right become
The laws and habits of the state.

"God send us men of steadfast will,
Patient, courageous, strong and true,
With vision clear and mind equipped,
His will to learn, His work to do.

"God send us men with hearts ablaze
All truth to love, all wrongs to hate;
These are the patriots nations need,
These are the bulwarks of the state."

—E. S. GILLMAN.

V

ISAIAH, THE DETERMINED DIPLOMAT

"For the Son of Man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."—MARK 10:45.

THE book of Isaiah is, in its literary form, one of the most poetically beautiful compositions of ancient lore, so much so that great composers have written oratorios around portions of the harmony of the text. The clearness of thought, however, has suffered by the beauty of the literary form.

It is generally conceded that there must have been two Isaiahs. One was responsible for the first thirty-nine chapters of the book, which contains messages delivered when Jerusalem was still standing, the ritual in full force, and the Hebrew government in control. The other is the author of the messages in the rest of the book, delivered by the prophet in Babylon, when Jerusalem was in ruins. The Jews had been in captivity for a long period, and Cyrus, the new ruler, was about to permit a return to Palestine. The style of the two parts of the book is utterly different.

But the messages of the books blend. The theme of the first message is the majesty of the Lord, and the need of reverence towards Him; the theme of the second message is the need of vicarious sacrifice that there might be progress.

Isaiah of Jerusalem was a born aristocrat, raised in the luxury and the culture of the better classes of Jerusalem, and trained with the noblest and best leaders of his day. He must have been a little child of about five when Amos delivered his first messages to Samaria.

He tells us a few facts about his life. Read Isaiah 1: 1; 6: 1; 7: 3; 8: 3; 14: 28; 20: 1–2.

King Uzziah had completed a record reign of fifty-two years of great leadership and kingly vigour. Judah had greatly prospered under him, and profoundly admired him, even though, in his later years, this unusual king had been afflicted with leprosy " for attempting to take the place of a priest at the altar." For several years Jotham had been coregent. Uzziah died in 735 B. C., and the " old guard " at Jerusalem, who had depended upon him for virile leadership, felt that the bottom had dropped out of life.

Despairing with his countrymen, Isaiah caught a vision of a divine leadership, and in the Temple, with its smoke of sacrifice, its incantations, and its dim lamps, he found the presence of God, of sin, of grace, and of service (6: 1 to 6: 8).

He began his ministry at once. The book we have, which bears his name, is probably a collection of rough, scattered sermons and messages, gathered together and edited by some one else, but, despite the lack of connection of thought, the beauty and poetic imagery remains undimmed. Read chapter 40.

His work was fourfold. 1. He was *an ethical teacher* who thundered forth in no uncertain tones his words

of sin and judgment. He strove to confirm the guilty in their guilt, until the land was purged in judgment, and the final remnant of repeated scourgings should be as the stock of a tree that has been felled. Read chapter 1 and chapter 5: 20–31.

2. He was *a social reformer.* He denounced specifically the social sins of his day and brought his woes against four specific violations of social justice—the abuse of divine trust in the misuse of land and property, the misuse of one's own life, the use of one's energy in wrongdoing, and the complacent spirit of content with things as they are, the spirit which never sees the need of reform. Read chapter 5; read also 3: 16–26; 10: 1–4; and chapter 28.

3. He was *a religious philosopher,* basing his whole philosophy of life on the need of reverence for the majesty of God. Awe was fast disappearing from life, and men were losing their spiritual sensitiveness and their respect for hallowed things. The word "worship" had dropped out of the average man's vocabulary. Read chapter 5, chapters 6–9, chapter 34.

And yet God would save a remnant, and that remnant would see the King in His beauty, in the golden age to come. In the face of overwhelming despondency Isaiah could see beyond present conditions and behold the glory of the future. He could look at the morally corrupt and spiritually stagnant city of his day, not merely with the sentimental eyes of a disillusioned visionary, or the thin, fond fancy of an Utopian dreamer, but with the confidence of a spiritual seer, and could discover in that dismal, present condition

the possibility of God's redemption and restoration. Read 4: 2–6. He could hear the rumbling of chariots on the horizon and see the foam on the impatient, prancing war horses of the nations which knew no other way but war; and yet write of the time when men shall learn war no more (2: 1–4).

This thought of a coming golden age is the most precious legacy given us by the ancient world. The wise men of Persia, and of Greece, and of Rome always spoke in opposite terms, of the golden days of the remote past, and of progress on the decline. And we ourselves slip into the easy speech of plaintive yearning for " the good old days." Isaiah never speaks of day and night, of summer and winter; but of night and day, winter and summer. " The best is yet to be." The golden age of man is ahead; we are steadily moving on with God to better things. While men were sighing over the death of a religious leader whose parallel they could not produce, Isaiah was shouting new words of optimism: " Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government . . . there shall be no end " (chapter 9).

4. Isaiah was *a statesman,* and as a statesman he made his greatest impress on contemporary life. Read chapter 22 and chapter 31. He stood alone among the ancient prophets. He was more helpful than Amos, not as tender as Hosea, not as narrow as Micah, not as emotional as Jeremiah, and not as visionary as

Ezekiel. As a vigorous man of affairs he brought the principles of God to play into the arena of politics, and with superb courage and undying faith strove to reveal God's way to man. And yet tradition says that he, too, was sawn asunder in his old age. Truly we "crucify our saviours, and then canonize them."

There were four great world crises in and around Jerusalem of Isaiah's day. In 737 B. C. a great Assyrian army under Tiglath Pileser marched towards Jerusalem, and battered and destroyed Samaria while King Uzziah, and the coregent, Jotham, sat trembling on their thrones in Jerusalem. Foreign habits then became the fad, and fashionable folks popularized foreign morals. Men yearned for a great leader, and Isaiah spoke of the Perfect Leader to come. Finally Ahaz, the new king of Judah, became a paid vassal of Tiglath Pileser. Read II Kings 16: 7–10.

In 711 Assyria began a great campaign against Ashdod, one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. Even the Assyrian religious rites now became popular among the faddists of Jerusalem, and the Jews began to make human sacrifices. The weak king Ahaz, who lacked both moral character and strong will, was succeeded by Hezekiah, weak, but willing to be led. Read Isaiah chapter 6: 1 to 10: 4. Hope was darkened. Read chapter 28. God's method of teaching would yet have effect. Chapters 20 and 21 describe Isaiah's barefooted appeal. Read chapters 29–32.

The third crisis began about 701 with the great western campaign of King Sennacherib of Assyria. Hezekiah had been on the throne for fourteen years,

and for forty years Isaiah had predicted with varying intensity and certainty the agonies of an Assyrian invasion. How could Judah, with her weak leaders, stand the shock? There had been a strong reaction from previous escapes. Read 2: 8 and 3: 1 through chapter 5; and 7: 1–2. Isaiah's tense account of these times is supplemented by II Kings 18: 13–16.

As Hosea had put it, Jerusalem "had sown the wind," and would "reap the whirlwind." A popular council of defence was called. One man arose suggesting a league of nations, an alliance with other peoples, and especially with Egypt. Another suggested a financial settlement. A third put his faith in a large army. And when Isaiah arose, the gathering grunted their disgust, for the prophet had the same old message. Isaiah repeated the message; there was no other way than God's way. We either develop goodness and security, or evil and ruin the same way: "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little." These politicians had had their alliances, mobilized their armies, settled their finances; and Jerusalem was no better off than before. Isaiah was right. "The lifelong habits of an individual or a community betoken, unmistakably, the manner in which the severe tests of life will be endured" (5: 26–30 and 10: 1–5). The cry went up: "To the sanctuaries!" Perhaps it was then that Isaiah uttered the ironic but appealing words of chapter 1. All other help was useless now. Chapter 22 records the typical philosophy of folks in despair.

The calamity occurred, and Isaiah's predictions were

fulfilled. Read II Kings 18: 13–16; Isaiah 1: 16–18, 7: 18–19 and chapters 28 to 31. Isaiah gathered the king and the people to him, and the counsellors decided to do nothing without first consulting him. In sheer faith and God-built hope he revived the demoralized people through prayer (33: 1–6), and saw, as a result of ultimate deliverance and redemption of his people, the eventual new Jerusalem (chapter 40).

The fourth and final crisis of Isaiah's day occurred about 690, in the midst of Sennacherib's great military campaign against the Assyrians and the Egyptians. The gold and silver treasures which Sennacherib had forced from Jerusalem during his previous campaign merely whetted his appetite for more. Against Isaiah's advice Jerusalem had allied herself with Egypt, and now the chastened and humiliated people could see in this newly approaching Babylonian army all the nemesis of their rash alliance, and know that nothing less than the unconditional surrender of the city would be demanded. Could they trust in God in a time like this? As the chariot wheels of the foe came rumbling down the rocky mountain roads, and the country people came rushing through the city gates in panic and frenzy, religion was put to an acid test. The Rab-shekah, the coarse, ironic spokesman-envoy of the foe, stood under a flag of truce at the city gate demanding unconditional surrender. Would might or right triumph? Would God or the beast dominate life? And Isaiah, of the triumphant faith, circled the walls to rouse the waning trust of the people.

The dark night came, and the Rab-shekah disap-

peared. And out of the dark night came the hand of God to protect them. A mysterious malady burst forth like a plague in the enemies' camp, and the pestilence paralyzed them. Clay tablets in the annals of Assyria give rumours of the strange fate of one of the armies in the Egyptian campaign. II Kings chapters 18 and 19 give the Jewish historical record, and Isaiah 36 and 37 give the word of the eyewitness. Byron's great poem, "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold," portrays the dramatic rescue in vivid poetry. And the reverberating forty-sixth psalm voices the spiritual gratitude of a people. Might had dwindled before right; the things of the spirit had mastered the things of the flesh; and belief in a one great sovereign God had been retained in the world.

"Like a beacon light in a weary land," Isaiah lived a transformed and radiant life among his people, his heart heavy with the sins of men, his mind calm with the consciousness of God, moving men's lives and conquering fear, prejudice, obstinacy and superstition with supreme faith. The way out of material distress, disorder and destruction, he would have men know, is the spiritual way of optimistic faith. He teaches spiritually minded men to sing: "The best is yet to be."

Isaiah, of Babylon, adds to the message. The golden days can come only through the suffering of a divine leader called to his task, (read 42: 1–7 and 49: 1–6) who shall be equipped to comfort and sustain men (50: 4–9). While people give themselves to material possessions, He will bring life to those who want life, and He will do it by vindicating pain and undergoing

suffering, a willing sacrifice. Read 52: 13 through chapter 53. The only way progress ever comes is by sacrifice. Some one goes into the valley of shadow to give us life. Some one died of fever willingly before we could ever construct a Panama Canal. The building of every bridge, every railroad, every great building costs blood. Stable government comes from Valley Forge, Gettysburg, and Belleau Wood. Men die that we may be freed from disease, cured of pain, given our progress. All reform, all progress, all freedom must come through the death pains of some one. "By His stripes we are healed." Read the triumphant song in chapter 55, which logically follows chapter 53.

Some of us have pictured religion as a citadel of defense against screaming, hostile foes; and some of us have deemed religion to be merely an agent of culture and an opiate for woe. But true religion is the reaction of human nature in its quest for God, a thing real, and yet to be realized, a vibrant, virile thing of practical life and progress. It is not a rule of safety, it is "an adventure of the spirit, a flight after the unattainable." When we come face to face with the bankruptcy of sheer materialism we can revive a buoyant optimism and create the spirit of progress by a new reverential sense of the presence of Him through whose constant, vicarious life we find the new freedom. The only symbol of true progress we have ever found in life is the symbol of the cross of sacrifice. In the face of despairing pessimism Isaiah points to the moral optimism which can remake the world.

QUESTIONS

How can we best create a sense of reverence and a spirit of worship in our lives to-day?

On our coins we stamp: "In God we trust." How far can we make that the philosophy of our politics and our diplomacy?

Do you believe the world is getting better or worse? Why do you so believe?

If Isaiah's "line upon line" method is correct, is our program of religious education adequate, either in the number of children reached or the time devoted in home and church?

Can you think of any true development which has come without sacrifice?

"Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter of the Past,
Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream not that the hour will last. . . .

"When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms and Republics fall,
Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each and each for all? . . .

"Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue,
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young? . . .

"Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth will be
Something other than the wildest modern guess of you and me. . . ."

—Alfred Tennyson.

VI

JEREMIAH, THE PERSECUTED EMANCIPATOR

"I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."—JOHN 10: 10.

JEREMIAH was but a youth in the troubled days of Jerusalem when the bursting life of a new-born spring impressed him with the presence of God in human affairs, and he answered the call to personal service. Read Jeremiah 1: 4–10. Born in the time of the tragic persecution of the prophets under Manasseh, reared in a godly home with noble traditions, deeply emotional, sensitive to the sufferings of men, and profoundly religious, he knew the bitter cost of establishing the truth in life, and underwent a severe struggle before he responded to the call of God.

Isaiah had seemed to preach that as long as the temple was safe Jerusalem was secure. And because the temple was still safe, the Jews felt impregnable. No good Jew ever thought of himself separate from his nation. But now the gathering forces of the irresistible Sythians on the border looked ominous. The old dogma was breaking down; for the temple was still secure, but Jerusalem was in danger. How could men cling to the old traditional dogma and face fearlessly the facts of life? Thus the young Jeremiah

felt that he was called for the destruction and the rebuilding of life (1: 13–18).

Jeremiah is unique among the prophets. He was so absorbed in the human and the divine need that the people's coming grief became his own pain. He fairly battled with God for the salvation of his people, and was so great a sufferer for them that he was literally a "man of sorrows," compelled to go on telling deaf ears of their doom (9: 1–11). The first six chapters of the record form beautiful lyric poems which were probably among his first utterances. Read 4: 23–26.

Five years after his call the discovery of the lost books of the law stimulated a temporary reformation, but it was so superficial that it passed away with the death of King Josiah. Read II Kings 22 and 23. When Josiah fell in battle against Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, hope fell, and faith was blasted. Jeremiah sought through his tears to warn of far worse calamities to come.

New troubles began. The Jews had been taught that if they kept the law and performed their religious rites they would prosper; and yet here was the leader of the reformation killed in battle. They were leaning on their ancestral past, their traditional dogmas, their inherited faith, for their redemption. Then Nineveh fell, and King Nebuchadnezzar seized Egypt; and Jerusalem was facing impending capture. Jeremiah alone had the vision to see the way out; but he was unable to get any one else to see what he saw.

He tried every possible means to express his message in a vivid and a startling manner. He laid aside

the skill of the orator, and used the histrionic art of the actor (13: 12–14; 17: 1; 18: 1–4; 19: 1–10; etc.). When leaders were in conference to consider a united revolt against Babylon, he walked into the room with a yoke around his neck. When the enemy army camped in the suburbs he declared his faith in ultimate deliverance by purchasing for a summer home the land on which the enemy was stationed. He spoke in public places and before private audiences, in hovels and in palaces, wherever men were.

The popular response to Jeremiah was the popular response to Jesus. They plotted against him, cursed him, fought against him, forbade him to marry and to have a home, denounced him as a pacifist, an enemy and a traitor, and drove him into a lonely, exiled life. Read 11: 8–21; 15: 10–17; and 20: 7–18. When he begged his people to be loyal directly to God, the priests, who demanded loyalty to the temple worship, to organized religion, branded him a radical; and when he reminded them of the promises of God to the individual they called him a fool and a knave. He cried to God for deliverance; yet God only steeled his soul to greater suffering and challenged him to greater endurance. Read 12: 5–6. He cursed the day he was born, and yearned for a quiet place to which to flee. But he had fire in his soul, and he did not flinch.

When the authorities forbade him to preach, he dictated his messages to a secretary. They ultimately came to the king, who read them, shredded them with his sword, and threw them in the fire (36: 1–26). Undaunted, Jeremiah dictated another roll, franker and

fuller than the first (36: 27–32). He was put in stocks (20: 1–3).

The king and his advisers, bred on a patriotism which sang, " My country, right or wrong," considered Jeremiah's messages to be political, harmful to big business and national affairs. When Jeremiah tried to leave Jerusalem for a rest in the country, he was seized as a deserter. He was put in a cell, then released, and cast into a cistern to die in the mire, from which he was rescued to the court of the guard by a sympathetic Ethiopian eunuch (37: 1–5 and 38: 1–28).

If sensitiveness to environment and consecration to duty are measures of life, then Jeremiah was one of the world's greatest men. He was both an incarnate conscience and an atoning life. With all his pains of persecution he remained undaunted, true to his vision, a follower of the gleam. He was the Abraham Lincoln of the Jews.

Jerusalem fell; and since Jeremiah had warned his people against alliance with Egypt, and had even suggested that the Chaldean army might be God's instrument of punishment, the Chaldeans looked on Jeremiah as one who had suffered for them. The Chaldean officials gave Jeremiah the choice of going to Babylon, befriended by royalty, freed from his personal foes, while his fellows were captives, or remaining in Jerusalem with the Jews who had repudiated him. He chose to remain with his people. He was supplied with victuals, and befriended by Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had appointed governor (39: 11–14 and 40: 1–6). Against the prophet's earnest

entreaties, the Jews fomented a plot and murdered the Chaldean governor, dragging Jeremiah with them as they escaped to Egypt. His last messages were delivered at Taliphanes, in Egypt, where he is said to have been stoned to death by the people he loved. For forty years he had given himself to the task of telling the truth to his people. He made plain the connection between righteousness and material welfare, sin and misery (22: 3–5 and 22: 13–16). He taught intimate personal relationship between each individual and his God (31: 33–34).

He probably wrote several of the Psalms. Five poems, with the rhythm peculiar to Hebrew melody, funeral dirges in the melancholy, plaintive cadence of the broken-hearted of Jerusalem, were written for wandering choirs of singers, and are preserved in the book of Lamentations. In the third dirge (Lamentations 3: 19–21) George Frederick Watts found the inspiration for his famous painting "Hope," which vividly portrays the soul of Jeremiah.

His period, like ours, was a transition period, when many old institutions were rocked until they tumbled away. The state fell; and because the Church was riveted to the state, the Church fell with it. The Jews were being dragged away from their religion into strange lands and customs. It seemed as if God Himself had been given a body blow, and that religion was doomed.

Could the individual man survive? Can a man survive world calamity? When the traditions our fathers deemed necessary are shattered, is there any religion

left? Jeremiah would have men look not at their fathers, but at themselves, for religious decisions and experiences. "Our fathers ate sour grapes, and therefore our teeth are set on edge," was the cry of Jeremiah's day. And it is a popular cry in our day, too, when germ cells, and microscopes, and family trees crowd out the Spirit of God from the catalogue of rebuilding agencies. But Jeremiah added: "Blame yourselves. *Ye* ate sour grapes." "By men's fruits, and not their roots, you know them." The men of Jesus' day said the same thing to the thundering John: "We do not need to repent, for we are children of Abraham." To which John replied: "God could raise from these stones children of Abraham. Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance."

Men are going about with the worn-out symbols of religion, but never letting it grip their souls, or electrify their experiences. Jeremiah wanted men to be mightier than their calamities. And so he set religion free from the mere outer institutions of life, and put it on an inner, personal basis. In a message of sheer beauty, which shines like a morning star in the dark night of the old religion, Jeremiah portrays a new covenant with God (31: 31–34). God will write His law not on stones, but on the hearts of men, and religion will be based neither on fear nor force, but on sincere love in each human heart. Men will not need statutes, or laws, or penalties, or any outward compulsion, but they will learn to do the right through sheer love of the right. There will be then a new patriotism, created to redeem mankind, and a new salvation, secured not

by reform, but by individual regeneration and personal consecration to God.

QUESTIONS

How can we best write the law on the hearts of men and train them to love the right?

In the vast organization of modern life do you ever feel that the individual is lost? What is Jeremiah's answer?

When many of the old traditional Church forms and traditions are shattered, would you conclude that there is less religion in the world?

We commonly link religion with prosperity and advocate religion that we might be prosperous. What did Jeremiah think of that?

Is your religion a dynamic personal experience day by day, or an inherited tradition?

"And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic mills?

"Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

"I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor will my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's fair and pleasant land."

—William Blake.

VII

NAHUM, THE MESSENGER OF VENGEANCE

"For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it."—MARK 8: 35.

FOR one hundred years the people of Judah had been threatened by the ever ominous Assyrian hordes who had been masters of Palestine since their conquest of Samaria. It had been the hand of God which had protected Jerusalem from destruction under Isaiah, but the persistent menace of the foe had been but temporarily removed. With this invincible pagan power on the horizon, like some eternal sword of Damocles swaying overhead, the Jews could not understand how Jehovah, their supposedly tribal benefactor, would permit them to be the puppet of Gentile greed.

Little is known of Nahum. Read 1: 1. He was a standpatter, a reactionary, in his belief that the Jews were God's special people and could not fall, and that the Assyrians were not the people of God and therefore were doomed. He mentions no sins of the Jews and thunders no condemnation against them. He could not see, as Ezekiel later saw, that the Assyrians might be God's chosen instrument of punishment for the sins of his people. He strove merely to answer the problem of faith arising in the Jewish mind of his day by

portraying the destruction of Nineveh, the city which, to the Jews, was the symbol of tyranny. He spoke of the inevitable fate which awaits all oppressors; and therein his message is eternal. Even as the same sun which whitens our linen darkens our skin, and makes the swamp to decay while it sweetens the flowers, so, Nahum would have men know, does our action towards God create His reaction towards us.

In the fragment of the book left us the poetry is unusually beautiful, and the literary style approaches that of Isaiah both in dignity and force. The descriptions of battle are singularly picturesque and vivid, and one can actually see the rumbling, rocking chariots, the sheen of the spears reflected from the torches, the nobles stumbling blindly in the surprise attack, the battering rams at work, and the bursting water mains flooding the city. Read chapter 2. The intense imagery is startling and moving. It has been called "the hottest book in the Old Testament." Chapter 3 is a record of carnage. As Thebes fell (B. C. 661) so, declares Nahum, proud, cruel Nineveh will also fall (3: 8). Tyrants shall taste of their own medicine —oppressors are eventually doomed. God is the moral judge of the universe, guaranteeing a secure peace to those who trust Him (1: 7 and 15) and avenging wrongdoers (1: 3–8).

There are, after all, only three fundamental views of life. We can believe that man is sufficient unto himself, the complete master of his own destinies, the moulder of his own fate. But the facts of life often deny it. Or we can believe that some force outside

Gardner Webb College Library

of man, God, is supreme, and that man is a mere cat's paw, a victim of whim, a cog in a wheel. Either of these beliefs makes us cynical, drab, and depressed when we face the fearful calamities of life. Or we can believe, and Nahum would have us believe, that neither man by himself, nor God by Himself, controls life; but that God and man, working together, can mould destiny, right the wrong, dominate and determine the future. Nineveh was doomed not because she was Nineveh but because she did not coöperate with God. And any nation, any man, who lives in self-righteous pride, ignoring God, is courting sure calamity.

QUESTIONS

Would you agree with the statement that history is "His-Story"? Why?

Is the word of Jesus true: "Those who use the sword die by the sword"? Can you illustrate?

Can we trace the generally aggressive spirit of the Jew to his long contact with aggressive and warlike peoples?

How far does the law of compensation apply in our lives—that oppression brings its own doom and a policy of might invites disaster?

"One ship drives east, another drives west
While the selfsame breezes blow;
'Tis the set of the sail and not the gale
That bids them where to go.

"Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate
As we journey along through life;
'Tis the set of the soul that decides the goal
And not the calm or the strife."

—ANONYMOUS.

VIII

HABAKKUK, THE MAN OF FAITH

"If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—JOHN 14: 23.

THIS book differs in three distinct ways from the messages of the other Old Testament prophets. It is not a spoken discourse, but a purely literary production; it is not addressed from God to the people, but from the people to God, and God speaks only to answer the complaints of men; it does not deal principally with questions of moral conduct, but with the philosophy of life itself. The book opens in mystery and questionings; it closes in certainty and affirmation.

We know nothing definite about the author. He twice calls himself a prophet (1: 1 and 3: 1), and tradition says that he was a priest connected with the temple service.

In common with the other prophets he portrayed a condition of moral anarchy, corruption and oppression. He complained to God in 1: 2–4, and the Lord replied in 1: 5–11; he appealed in 1: 12–2: 1, and the Lord answered in 2: 2–20. Habakkuk was not content to point out the troubles in life; he wanted to know why such apparent injustice is permitted. It was the good

people who were suffering, and it was the wicked who were prospering. Why? Jehovah answered that He was raising up the Chaldeans to punish the wicked of Israel; but the answer only intensified the problem. How could the godless Chaldeans be God's chosen instrument? Could the mere prospect of better things for the nation in the far-off future atone for lives which were then completely devoid of any earthly joy or peace? There was a slight comfort in the hope that the prophet and his people might pass away before the nation was destroyed; but that was very cold comfort, indeed.

Habakkuk withdrew himself to his watchtower to think through this baffling problem of the apparent injustice of life (2: 1), conscious that God does reveal His truths through the consecrated minds of men. Only those who learn " to labour and to wait " do solve the riddles of life, and make the obscure truths crystal clear (2: 3–4). As an artist stands back from his model to see it in full perspective, so the prophet withdrew from life to see life as a whole.

Habakkuk's question is our question. Amidst all the selfishness and unholy ambition, the rub of the humdrum harness of everyday life, the sin and the sorrow, the trial and the temptation, the misery and the despair—where men are treated as fishes or helpless worms (1: 15–16)—we find ourselves crying with the prophet: " Why do the wicked flourish? How do the people who ignore God prosper? Are things never to be balanced aright? "

As a result of his spiritually directed thinking Ha-

bakkuk made two great discoveries, profound in their very simplicity, in answer to the insistent questionings of men. And the solution of the problem of life's inequalities lies in the application of these two revealed principles of life.

Of the evil man, even in his prosperity, Habakkuk finds: " Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright in him." And of the godly it is discovered: " But the righteous shall live by his faith " (2: 4). These two truths go hand in hand through all the experiences of life.

Here is a foul and filthy man in the community, leading men astray and prospering by graft and greed. Why does not God remove him by disease or some other fell stroke? God does not do things that way. God never plays false to our trust by substituting might for right. If God did use force to accomplish His ends, we would all fear Him and none of us would love Him. The selfish men who seem to prosper are punishing themselves. Men are not punished *for* their sins; they are punished *by* their sins. God does not punish men; men create the circumstances which make them the victims of themselves. Yonder dominantly selfish man in the midst of his prosperity is breeding his own destruction in his heart; he is losing the power to love and to be loved unselfishly, losing the refinements of life, the sensitiveness of soul; he is chilling his finer self, shrivelling his spiritual growth, deadening and poisoning the very springs of better life. The curse of material prosperity is material prosperity, and the curse of bad living is bad life. The proud, swollen,

self-centered people are unhappy in their mere possessions.

The parallel truth is equally clear: "The righteous shall live by his faith." Normally the Jew could not think in abstract terms. Instead of abhorring wickedness, he hated wicked men. It was not until several centuries had elapsed that the great Greek teachers taught the world to think of evil and of good, and not merely of evil men and good men. But Habakkuk bridged the centuries. Long before the great Greek teachers he made men distinguish between mere faithfulness and faith, and long before the days of Christ he gave men the germ of the Christian paradox of gladness in the midst of sorrow, of peace in the midst of tribulation. To Habakkuk the reward of faith is not the mere puny thing we call prosperity; the reward of faith is the kind of life it breeds, a life of implicit and intelligent trust in a great, loving God who cares and shares. Faith never fails. The reward of a life of faith cannot be a materialistic thing which harbours within it the germs that kill the soul; the reward of a life of faith is *life,* more abundant, "overflowing," sensitive to the finer things, responsive to the nobler instincts, buoyant with a joy that money cannot buy, and poised with a peace that the world cannot give.

If we forget either of these two truths of life, we are perplexed.

For, adds Christ: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." And the Master pointed to the grasping, deluded, prosperous, proud rich, and said: "How hardly

shall a rich man enter the kingdom of heaven! " But to the poor of spirit, the meek, the persecuted, the troubled, He added: " I am come that ye might have life," for He revealed in Himself a kind, loving Father God, in whom men could have boundless faith; and He wanted men to know that the result of adventuresome faith is buoyant life, a far bigger and more intense thing than mere material living.

Having gazed at the stars until the starlight was reflected in his eyes, and the triumph of his great discovery enveloped him like aroma from his vibrant soul, Habakkuk came out of his watchtower a new man. The Great Artist had revealed life to him in its proper perspective.

A group of five triumphant taunt songs against the proud Chaldeans reflects his new mood (2: 5, 9, 12, 15, 18) and contrasts the woes of empty and stupid idol worship with the joyous song of the advent of the living God. " The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him." And the book closes with a magnificent psalm of life, set to the rhythm of an elegy and sung to laud the discovery of life as it is; read chapter 3, " For the chief musician, on my stringed instruments." It is the triumphal pæan of a clear-visioned soul who, despite his trust in God, faces dire personal loss and national calamity, and discovers in the calamity the steadfastness and buoyancy which is the reward of a life of faith:

" For though the fig tree shall not flourish,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,

And the fields shall yield no food;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls;
Yet will I rejoice in Jehovah,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength;
And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet,
And will make me to walk upon my high places."

QUESTIONS

Can you verify Habakkuk's philosophy in your own experience?

What did Jesus mean when He said: " It is hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven " ?

Has true religion been developed more by adversity or by prosperity?

If we are punished by our sins, and not for our sins, can you explain the World War, recent happenings in China, or your own miseries?

Did Jesus Christ promise to deliver us from sin, or merely from the punishment sin brings? Can we live the life of faith without seeking divine help?

" Down by the road of evil
Wanders my spirit;
If it receives not succour
It will die shortly;
The devil, he deceives it
With his false reasoning;
The senses, they promise it
Every possible pleasure;
The world ever invites it
To indulge itself in iniquity:
My spirit, thus tempted,
Who now will help it?

"Help thyself, good for nothing,
With the gift that God gives thee;
Thou hast full power
To make thyself worthy. . . .
Thou canst not be conquered
Save thou art willing.
Stronger is faith
Than every adversity."

—Attributed to MARTIN LUTHER.

IX

ZEPHANIAH, THE PROPHET OF A WORLD WAR

" He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."
—MATTHEW 10: 22.

DURING the long reign of King Manasseh in Jerusalem, 686–641 B. C., foreign fashions had contaminated religious life with every conceivable kind of fad, novelties of dress and social conduct were the fashion, and prophecy was in partial eclipse. Read Zephaniah 1: 1–9. Manasseh was succeeded by Ammon, who reigned but two years, and then the coming of the boy king, Josiah, brought new influences to bear on public life, until prophetic principles began to be revived.

About a dozen years after the coronation of Josiah, the Scythians began to break loose from the mountain fastnesses of the north, and came pouring down in floodlike raids against Judah. Things began to look exceedingly dark for the little Jewish kingdom; in fact, it seemed as if everything from the Black to the Caspian Seas would be annihilated by the barbarians. It appears to be history's law that " whenever civilization seems to be choking amidst weeds of wealth and debt and servitude, effete life, and material cynicism, the nomad drives like a plough to relieve the festering sit-

uation." The coming of the Scythians called out two prophets—Jeremiah and Zephaniah. Zephaniah saw in the sudden bursting of this great world war the coming of "the day of Jehovah," a day of wrath and of judgment.

Even in the midst of such troubled times, however, Zephaniah did not show the fiery zeal of Micah, or betray the unfathomed depths of heart of Hosea; he lacked the sensitiveness of soul of Jeremiah, with whom he was acquainted. In his own picturesque and vivid style he sometimes quoted almost verbally from the earlier prophets. But he was a student of life who thought in terms of the great laws of cause and effect. Although he was not so vigorous and powerful as other prophets, he had his own message to bring to his people; for the book of Zephaniah gives us the first tinge of apocalyptic literature, with its announcement of judgment, and its call to repentance.

The book is written in poetry, with a dirgelike rhythm, and in its literary form, is composed of oracles, the first group of which depicts the judgment coming to Jerusalem, the second the judgment sweeping out to the nations of the world, and third the complete restoration which follows judgment. "When one thinks of the smallness of such a kingdom as Judah in the standards of secular history, it is most impressive to realize the wide outlook of prophecy." Read 1: 2.

Zephaniah portrays the religious fads and fancies, quacks and superstitions of men when real faith in true religion wanes (1: 2–6). In the hour of calamity the first people to be demoralized and defeated are

those without sound and firm religious foundations, religious faddists, mass thinkers, who worship mongrel gods. In time of world war, or of any widespread conflict, men need to remember that God is a spirit, who does not use physical force to accomplish His ends, but who does give to us the freedom to choose the evil or the good. These great periods of suffering and of judgment are parts of the great human struggle upward; and God is in the struggle.

God is shown offering up the people of Judah as a sacrifice, until everything inadequate, outgrown, obstructive, and sinful in men and institutions must go. In the great testing times of life God peers into all the alcoves and corners of civilization until mansions and mud huts, the élite and the enslaved have come under His searching light. Read 1: 12–13. Fruit was left on the lees to give it colour and body; but if it was left too long it became thick, syrupy, feeble, and ready to decay. "To settle on the lees" became a parable for slothful, muddy-minded folk, content with things as they are, wanting no reform, rotten in their respectability. Seedtime is the time of man; harvest time is the day of the Lord.

Zephaniah then applied this national law of sowing and reaping, of cause and effect, to the other nations (2: 1–15), as well as to Judah (1: 8–13); for it is an inevitable law, as exacting and precise in its workings as the law of gravity. The wrong has within it the seed of its own doom; only the right endures.

But the prophet is positive that the right will not fail eventually, for the moral order of life is as certain

and as relentless as the physical order (3: 1–7). The heedless, the reckless, the selfish, the treacherous, the immoral and the irreverent are heading straight for trouble and disaster. And yet, in a great world crisis, God not only destroys the peoples and the institutions which are unrighteous, but out of the turmoil and confusion, the smoke and the hate of war He ultimately gathers a people who are loyal to Him. Wickedness and lying, selfish politics and secret diplomacy, greed and graft, trust in physical things, the vainglory of display, and all the myriad other sources of unrest will crumble; and then, out of the awful swelter of judgment, God will bring a people from whose eyes the blindness has been removed, and they will see life aright, and discover in it a new sense of brotherhood and good will. Read 3: 11–13.

The third chapter of the book of Zephaniah, with its assurance of the ultimate triumph of the redeemed of God, is an exquisite picture of divine motherhood. It has often been called " the sweetest love song in the Old Testament." Read 3: 14–20.

We need to remind ourselves in this modern age of speed that we cannot take short cuts in the realm of the spirit. We all dream of success without effort, of triumph without toil, of reputation without virtue, of fame without achievement, of reward without sacrifice. Our patience sometimes wanes with reference to a God who does not imitate the industrial efficiency of our mills and grind out character and moral improvements as we grind out cans. But we need to remember that we live in a world and not in a factory. Spiritual re-

sults come by slow growth and not by manufacture. We need not expect " angel visitants " or " opening skies " in the " day of the Lord." What we sow, we reap; and ofttimes, in the agonizing experience of our human harvest periods, we can discover, if we will, the veritable " day of the Lord," and come to realize that the fiery trials of the soul can become seasons of expanding life and character building, when the dross is burned away and the purified spirit of man remains.

Zephaniah would remind us that our world struggles, our community efforts of reform, our own periods of sore temptation, are Gethsemanes, the very birth pangs of a new day, and must be viewed from the perspective of the eternal eye. In the midst of such calamities, God works His good way in us for the betterment of us all.

QUESTIONS

If the growth of the Kingdom of God is evolutionary and not revolutionary, what part can we have in its development?

What is your answer to the question: " Where was God in the World War? "

What is your answer to the question: " Has Christianity failed? "

Would it be an advantage for us to return to the prophetic vocabulary and speak of war as " the day of the Lord " ?

Do we emphasize enough the judgment of God in actual life? If we ourselves sow the seed of our own calamities wherein is the calamity " the judgment of God " ?

"The Day of the Lord is at hand, at hand;
Its storms roll up the sky;
The nations sleep starving on heaps of gold;
All dreamers toss and sigh;
The night is darkest before the morn;
When the pain is sorest the child is born,
And the Day of the Lord is at hand.

"Gather you, gather you, angels of God—
Freedom, and Mercy, and Truth;
Come, for the earth is grown coward and old;
Come down and renew us her youth.
Wisdom, Self-Sacrifice, Daring and Love,
Haste to the battlefield, stoop from above—
To the Day of the Lord at hand.

"Who will sit down and sigh for a lost age of gold,
While the Lord of all ages is here?
True hearts will leap up at the trumpet of God,
And those who can suffer can dare.
Each old age of gold was an iron age, too,
And the weakest of saints may find stern work to do,
In the Day of the Lord at hand."

—Charles Kingsley.

X

EZEKIEL, THE ACTOR IN EXILE

"Believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."—JOHN 4: 21, 24.

EZEKIEL was born and raised in stormy and turbulent times. He was only twenty-four years of age when Nebuchadnezzar's army seized and captured Jerusalem (II Kings 24: 11–16), and the first large company of the Jews was led into exile. The policy of the Babylonians in Jerusalem was similar to the policy of the Assyrians years before in the capture of Samaria; the leaders in all phases of life were led off into captivity, and the relatively unimportant classes were left in the city under heavy guard.

Thus there were two centers of Jewish life during the eleven years between the first and second captivity—the one, containing the best of the Jewish culture, on the Chebar canal, in Babylon, where the Jews were given economic and social freedom, but were not permitted to leave the country; the other, at Jerusalem under Zedekiah, a remnant which finally organized itself to resist further Babylonian aggression, and was ignominiously conquered, and exiled, in the second captivity. During this memorable eleven-year period

Jeremiah was in Jerusalem and Ezekiel was in Babylon.

Ezekiel was of a priestly family and grew up near Jerusalem. Read Ezekiel 1: 3. He was carried captive eight years after Daniel's deportation. Amid the tragic sadness of the times, and the horrible experiences of periodic deportations, he seems to have had very little youth.

We find him among the dejected captives along the Chebar canal (1: 1–3 and 3: 15), where he kept melancholy watch in silence for five long years before he began his ministry. Chapter 3 describes his call. From the close similarity of thought and language it is evident that he was quite familiar with and strongly affected by Jeremiah's teachings. He had probably heard Jeremiah frequently in Jerusalem, and doubtless he had a roll of Jeremiah's teachings with him in Babylon; for Jeremiah's sermons and messages were written and distributed. Read Jer. 29: 1; 29: 31; and 36: 32. Compare, for example, Jer. 3: 6–11 with Ezek. 23: 1–49.

The book of Ezekiel was completely written by the prophet himself, and is not the mere reporting or editing of a scribe or listener. There is far more quiet meditation and far less turbulent passion and activity in this prophetic book, and it lacks the blunt staccato of historical narrative. It is exceedingly methodical in its symbolism, although it is not logical in its treatment; it is carefully written, but its style is artificial, and neither attractive nor interesting. But the message is in the man rather than in the mere literary

style of the book. What others make incidental he makes central, for he was master of the histrionic art, and one of the supreme actors of all time.

Moulton calls Ezekiel's form of discourse the "emblem prophecy." Typical illustrations are found in 37: 15–18, and in 24: 1–14. Isaiah walked barefooted to illustrate the sorrows of coming captivity, and Jeremiah buried a linen girdle in the river mud to portray the decay of his people by sin. But while such methods of teaching were incidental to those prophets, Ezekiel made them his principal approach to men. We lose the power of the prophet Ezekiel in the printed page because Occidentals are deficient in imagination, in gesture, and in dramatic emotion.

When the fall of Jerusalem seemed nigh and excitement was at a fever heat among the Jews in Babylon, Ezekiel dramatized the whole siege, with starvation rations, and under revolting conditions. Read chapters 4 and 21. Sometimes the emblem is followed by a parable, or emblem in narrative form. Read chapters 15 and 17. Sometimes there is a riddle, when natural objects are strangely mingled to suggest human powers and movements (17: 1).

We form our thoughts from reading habits based on the Greek model, with its appeal to the mind in abstract terms, such as justice, goodness, sin, or evil. The Jew thought in images made to appeal through the eye to the childlike mind, and not to logical adult reasoning. Some of these images are absurd to the physical eye of an adult, and confusing to the logical mind of an adult, but appealing and convincing to the childlike

Oriental mind, which thought in pictures. It is impossible to understand Ezekiel, or parts of Daniel, or the book of Revelation, until we think in picture visions, somewhat weird symbols of reality, instead of logical abstractions.

To the Jews the city was the head of the state, and the Church and the city were one. When the city fell, the Church fell, too. When the state fell, the Jews were convinced that religion had gone. Jeremiah, to whom they would not listen, had counselled them to settle down, to marry, to be busy in constructive tasks, and God would eventually restore them. But they delighted rather in the words of the false prophets who told them what they wanted to hear about military victories and revenge. Ezekiel warned them of their own weakness, of Babylon's strength, and of God's way of discipline. The Jews had not learned the difference between patriotism and religion; their religion was, and to a great extent is to-day, a purely racial thing. Instead of singing: "O, Jehovah, if I forget thee," the Jew sang: "O, Jerusalem, if I forget thee." Ezekiel would have us learn the difference between the physical forces and the spiritual values of life; he would have us realize that the Kingdom of God is bigger than mere civilization.

The young captive prophet responded nobly to the call of his three-fold commission. Read chapters 3 and 33. First, he was to denounce his people as rebels against God, whose city must be destroyed before restoration could be had (3: 4–15 and chapters 14 and 15). Second, he was to be a watchman of individual

souls. In a transition era he saw, as Jeremiah saw, that a spiritual religion of the individual soul must take the place of the religion of the state (3: 16–21 and 33: 7–9). Third, instead of going to the people as other prophets had done, he was to make the people come to him. This is the conception of the work of the modern preacher. See 8: 1; 14: 1; chapter 2.

Despite their shallow optimism, Ezekiel's people were in sore distress. They had been spared many of the humiliating and painful experiences of captivity so vividly pictured for us on ancient bas reliefs; for they were not stripped and beaten and chained. But they had been literally torn by the roots from that Jerusalem where, for centuries, their forbears had believed that God met with men; and they had no conception of Jehovah's ability to meet them anywhere else. They had lived to see the degrading, calamitous end of a long, proud history. They were mountaineers, used to the freedom of the crags and the peaks of the everlasting ranges, and had learned to sing: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." Now they were deposited on a flat and dusty plain, on the banks of a slow, sluggish, irrigation ditch, homesick and heartsick. They had lost their home, their freedom, their pride, their religion and their God.

The young man Ezekiel strove to solve their problems. But they accepted him reluctantly, for he was not a good mixer (20: 49).

If you find God only in traditionary ways, and the old traditions and customs are smashed into pieces, what hope is there? To this shattering and searching

question Ezekiel had a clear and definite reply. The figure seems a bit grotesque to us mechanical Westerners, prosaic in our thinking, but the revolutionary message behind the figure is never to be forgotten: Ezekiel portrayed God on a strange and weird aeroplane, leaving Jerusalem and flying to the Chebar canal, where he steps off the strange flying machine, to comfort and dwell with His captive people (1: 4–28). Before the prophet can receive his commission from One who is no longer an absentee God, he must, symbolically speaking, digest and master the truth. Ezekiel does this by eating the roll of the book (chapter 2). He shaves his head with a sword to indicate coming disaster (chapter 5). And the first section of the book closes with the death of his wife and the impending doom, the fall of Jerusalem, drawing near (chapter 24).

Many of Ezekiel's chapters contain menacing prophecies against both Israel and foreign nations. Read chapters 33 and 48. Sensitive to the signs of his times, yet faithful to the old ideals, with a terrible earnestness and a sense of profound reverence, the captive prophet was ever facing a new day.

Before the exile the Jew could think of himself only in terms of the state. Ezekiel pointed out that the individual makes the state, and that the state exists for the individual. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "It is not God's way, it is your ways, which are uneven" (chapters 33 and 18). Then with a new burst of light Ezekiel describes the culmination of a new type of civilization, in which religion is to be actually a part of the warp and woof of life (33: 1–9; 34: 12 and

31; 36: 27; 39: 21). And the name of that new social state, symbolically described as a New Jerusalem, will be: "Jehovah Lives Here" (chapters 40–48). Men will never feel that God is a long way off from where they live. God will ever be where men need Him. Amid crass and cynical pessimism Ezekiel would teach us to make religion a vital, personal experience, and thus to find God where we actually dwell, until even the sordid, despondent places become the cities of the Lord.

The prophet would create for us, then, a new conception of the Church, and of religion (chapters 36 and 37). He takes us in spirit to the Brook Kidron, flowing out of the old physical Jerusalem through stony, barren, desolate country to the lonely basin of the Dead Sea, and he shows us this tiny stream suddenly beginning to swell until its flooded, freshened banks become filled with newborn flowers and fruits, and even the Dead Sea, into which the flooded stream flows, teems with marine life (chapter 47). So shall the stream of personal religious experience, once dried, barren, puny, rise with new vigour and sparkling fertility until it literally transforms and beautifies the world.

The lovely figures of Ezekiel—the shepherd, the watchman, the reviving dry bones, the rising subterranean stream of religious experience, as vital and as personal as consciousness—ought to become increasingly familiar to us. But we cannot afford to lose his vital central message in the mere beauty of his symbols. We need to make our religion a vital, personal, spir-

itual experience of the presence of God. We, too, are prone to think of religion in the shallow terms of material civilization. We often have made a Cæsar out of God; and we have often made a god out of the Cæsar of war, of sport, of business. But the prophet of Babylon would speak to us the same word which was spoken by the prophet of Bethlehem: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God, the things that are God's." "Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall men worship; for God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

QUESTIONS

Have you ever been inclined to feel that God is limited to one meeting place with men—in the church? In the United States? In Occidental civilization?

How can we release religion from institutionalism and center it in the hearts of men? Can it be said of our community: "God is here"?

How can we develop a practical mysticism?

What do we need the most to-day, and how can we develop it—information, reformation, or transformation?

Have you ever felt the noble dignity and wide religious responsibility portrayed in Ezekiel 34: 31 and in 33: 8?

"Where'er the gentle heart
Finds courage from above,
Where'er the heart forsook
Warms with the breath of love,
Where faith bids fear depart,
City of God, thou art.

"Where in life's common ways
With cheerful feet we go,
Where in His steps we tread
Who trod the paths of woe,
Where He is in the heart,
City of God, thou art.

"Not throned above the skies,
Not golden walled afar,
But where Christ's two or three
In His name gathered are,
Be in the midst of them
God's own Jerusalem."

—FRANCIS T. PALGRAVE.

XI

OBADIAH, THE PROPHET OF RETRIBUTION

"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets."—MATTHEW 7: 12.

WE know very little personally, either through history or tradition, about the prophet Obadiah. His name means, "a servant, a worshipper, of Jehovah." From allusions in the fragment of his prophecy left to us, and from slight suggestions in other prophetic books (see Jer. 49: 7–22 and Ezek. 35: 1–15), we infer that he witnessed the fall of Jerusalem, and began his ministry after that calamity had occurred, and Jeremiah's public voice was silent.

The form of the fragment known as the book of Obadiah is what has been well called "the poetic doom prophecy," interspersed with the lyric songs of the people of God, expressed by an ambassador who goes among the nations to tell of God's purpose against Edom. Verses 1–3 form the first stanza, and verses 4–6 the second stanza, of the poetic portion of the book. A similar form of doom prophecy is to be found in Ezekiel 25: 12–14. Verses 1–9 contain the announcement of divine judgment against Edom; verses 10–16 describe the crime that caused the judgment;

verses 17–24 recount the restoration of downtrodden Israel.

The agony of Judah's harsh calamity was aggravated by the loud and haughty rejoicing of Judah's neighbour, Edom. It was Edom which long ago had refused Moses' polite request to permit the wandering Jews to go through their land on the way to the promised country. And now, at the capture of Jerusalem, Edom shared in the plunder, seized and enslaved many escaping Jews (verse 7), utterly forgetful that they, too, were sons of Abraham. Naturally secure in the isolation of her rugged mountain region, Edom became completely absorbed in herself, and arrogantly contemptuous of all other people. She aided no one; and she hastened to despoil every doomed neighbour. Edom thus became the personification of self-centeredness and self-sufficiency.

The prophet pointed not merely to Edom's punishment (verses 1–9) and to Edom's guilt (10–14) but to the law of retribution on all such nations. Edom has within her own heart the seed of destruction. The law of life is plain—as men sow, they reap; as nations do, they are done by; the people who never help, will never be helped. Selfishness is the greatest and deadliest boomerang in the world (verse 16). The people who live to themselves will die by themselves. Those who use the sword will perish by the sword.

In the spirit of prophetic optimism Obadiah closes his message with a promise of restoration to the suffering "house of Jacob" (17–21). Out of Judah's disaster there was to come a glorious and noble contribu-

tion to that kingdom which is to be Jehovah's very own; while Edom's indifference to human suffering and calamity promised nothing but disaster (verse 18).

Self-interest, as a dominant and all-absorbing policy of life, is a purely pagan and an ultimately unwise principle. It is the doctrine of undiluted self-interest in our political and economic life which has caused the structure of civilization to totter in places, in the latter days, and threatened social ruin as the fruitage of war. Kant set tests for rational morality: "Act so that the principle of your action might be made a universal law." "Treat every person always as an end and not a means." It is precisely that social quality, so conspicuous in the teachings of Jesus, which makes the Christian life the way to a happier and a permanent abundance. "For what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" . . . "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it."

Not isolation, but interest; not security, but selflessness; not mere justice, but sacrificial love is the way—the only way—of true development.

QUESTIONS

Why is the doctrine of isolation dangerous to America?

Does America receive any spiritual benefit from sending missionaries to the Orient? Can this be a true motive?

Why is not material prosperity always a sign of spiritual progress?

Is the eagle, the keenest and most powerful of birds of prey, an adequate symbol for America? What symbol do you suggest?

How can we best convince men that dominant selfishness brings destruction to them?

"Mine are all lands and seas,
All flowers, shrubs and trees,
All life's design,
My heart within me thrills
For all uplifted hills,
And for all streams and rills;
The world is mine.

"And all men are my kin,
Since every man has been,
Blood of my blood.
I glory in the grace
And strength of every race
And joy in every trace
Of brotherhood.

"The days of pack and clan
Shall yield to love of man,
When war flags are furled,
We shall be done with hate,
And strife of state with state,
When man with man shall mate,
O'er all the world."

—ANONYMOUS.

XII

DANIEL, THE VOICE OF RELIGIOUS CONVICTION

"All things are possible to him that believeth."
—MARK 9: 23.

THE book of Daniel presents several problems of structure and interpretation which it is necessary to survey briefly before we can grasp the author's message. In its literary form it is composed of two distinct parts welded together without a very definite plan, a group of stories, followed by confirmatory visions, confident assurances of the future. In these visions we discover the apocalyptic style of the Hebrews at its best. (The Greek word for apocalyptic is a combination of two words which, freely translated, mean "to uncover," "to draw aside the curtain of the future.") Part of the book is written in the first person (chapters 7–12), and a part in the third person, around a historic Daniel, and containing probable excerpts from his notes. Moreover, part of the book is written in Aramaic, and part in Hebrew, and the changes from one language to the other, and back again, are abrupt.

Little is known of the origin of the book, and we have nothing but surmises to define its exact historic place. It is plainly evident, however, that it was

written and circulated at a time when practically all Jewish liberty had been paralyzed by captivity, and such a terrorizing persecution had arisen that the normal Jew could find no repose of spirit, and could discover little cause for faith in the presence of God in life. Out of this faltering faith in natural processes the author of the book of Daniel aroused a new conviction that God would intervene in life, and have His way through supernatural means.

The book is inspired by a dual purpose. It was written not only to arouse a new faith in God, but to interpret life. For, despite his intense patriotism, the author of the book of Daniel could see beyond Israel. For the first time in Old Testament lore there is a real sympathy with and an appreciation of a non-Jewish culture and civilization, and the distinct impression is given of a philosophy of universal history, with its conception that the Gentile nations, too, are aspects of a world plan ultimately to terminate in the Kingdom of God on earth.

The seemingly contradictory and conflicting aspects of the book of Daniel are harmonized when we realize that, although the book was written at a time of Jewish persecution, its great aim and vivid message is to show to suffering and despairing men of all ages the invincibility of faith in and dependence on God. The question of the date of the book is of minor importance. It has a practical, vivid message for suffering, persecuted men of all ages, especially for those who are tempted to give up their religion and their belief in God for material, political, and physical free-

dom and happiness. Like the book of Revelation it speaks a timely, yet timeless, word of clarion cheer in the hour of dire need, when hope begins to fail and faith begins to crumble.

The message consists of six stories, and the revelation.

The first incident, related in chapter 1, teaches the paramount lesson that men who keep themselves from uncleanness are superior to those who through indifference or ignorance soil their souls.

The second story, chapter 2, describes how the men who live close to God can see through the mysteries of life, and suggests that the great empires of this world shall give way ultimately to the empire of God. Read especially 2: 44.

The third message, chapter 3, recalls the noble courage of three men who deemed their faith in God to be more valuable than their physical life, and who preferred the burning fires of martyrdom to surrender of their faith. Rather than bow the knee to an idol they chose the fiery furnace, believing that their God would deliver them. "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods." Because of their courage they found more abundant life.

Chapter 4 relates the story of a king who lost his mind, and illustrates the end of pride and self-sufficiency.

The dramatic description of Belshazzar's feast, chapter 5, explains the rise of Daniel from an obscure position to the third rulership in the kingdom.

Jealousies follow, chapter 6, a plot is fomented, for-

bidding prayer to any god save the king, and Daniel is caught by his enemies, praying to his Jehovah, in violation of the new law. He is cast into a den of lions, and the gullible king, whose pride was the tool used by Daniel's enemies, calms Daniel with a word of faith: "Thy God whom thou servest continually will deliver thee." The king nervously paces the floor all night, while the hungry lions stand awed before the iron faith of Daniel, to whom God was more real than lions. Daniel is delivered and rewarded, and his God is honoured above all gods.

The poetic revelation of the book of Daniel is moulded on the symbolism of Ezekiel, and is purely apocalyptic. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 are typical. Read especially chapters 11: 32 and 12: 3.

Up until the time of Daniel practically all of the prophets had spoken of a coming time when all men should obey Jehovah, a Utopia which should arrive through the natural processes of human history. As God had worked through natural agencies in the past, making even normal history "His-story," so even in the present all life was moving to the "great far-off divine event," the era of righteousness and justice on earth. But the serene faith of the earlier prophets in the natural processes of life was blasted by persecution and suffering. To the apocalyptic writers the natural processes of the world were not good, but bad; their present world was controlled not by godlike but by diabolical forces, and the only hope left for men lay not in the forces of life around them, but in the intervention of God from the outside. This is

what the book of Daniel means by its strange signs and its mystic numbers. Most of the prophets believed in the fulfillment of God's will by an evolutionary process; Daniel, and his school of apocalyptic thinkers, believed that God's will functions through a revolutionary process.

And yet through the vague symbolism and strange dreamings of the apocalypse there arises the clear conviction of the not far-distant coming of One who would personify and fulfil the durable hope and indomitable faith of spiritually minded men. A "son of man" shall come to right the wrongs of life and establish a new kind of a kingdom. Read 7: 13–14 and 9: 25, also 12: 2.

This strangely interesting book brings a practical message. It is a plea (1) for loyalty to one's self. In these days when we talk about repression as unmanly and control as "mid-Victorian," when unmorality is more dangerous than immorality and self-mastery is derided, Daniel teaches us anew the message that Shakespeare sang: "To thine own self be true; thou canst not then be false to any man." It is a plea (2) for loyalty to the faith. Sincere religion is the most irresistible thing on earth, and those who are faithful to God are invincible. Fire cannot burn their trust and lions cannot devour their faith. It is a plea (3) for loyalty to the Kingdom of God. Disappointments are often "His-appointments," and persecution God's way of testing. We need patriotism; but the men in whose heart altars there burns forever the fire of a greater patriotism, the unwavering confidence in the

sure coming of a Kingdom of God which shall bind all men together in brotherhood, are the men used by the Son of Man to advance that empire of good will. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

QUESTIONS

The popular Freudian dogma seems to imply that self-repression is dangerous. The author of Daniel suggests that he who masters himself can best master others. Which doctrine seems the more plausible? Why?

If you were ordered to-day to do something against your religious convictions, would you obey your conscience or the law of the land?

Which do we need to-day, less patriotism, or a greater conception of what true patriotism really means?

According to the teachings of Jesus is the Kingdom of God to come by revolution or by evolution?

How is it possible for us to-day to reach the secure heights of faith found in the book of Daniel?

"I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

"I would be friend of all, the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift."

—HOWARD A. WALTER.

XIII

HAGGAI, THE TEMPLE BUILDER

"But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—MATTHEW 6: 33.

THE record of the return of the Jews to Palestine is the story of an ancient Zionist movement rather than the tale of the trek of mighty hosts. The captive Jews in Babylon were given such freedom that they became commercially prosperous and content, and the proposed return to Palestine appealed to them emotionally, but not practically. Only a few meagre companies of those Jews in whom the religious appeal was urgent were willing to pay the price and wend their weary way back to the home of their fathers under the ardent leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua. The story of their painful experiences is told in the books of Nehemiah and Ezra. To these pilgrim bands we owe our spiritual heritage. One can imagine their feelings when, after weeks of exhausting travel, they viewed the ruined temple of their fathers' God!

When they arrived in the ruined Jerusalem their first urgent task was to build homes and protecting walls. They had brought back with them the sacred vessels of the temple which Nebuchadnezzar had car-

ried away, and which Cyrus had restored, and these sacred religious symbols of former glory inspired them to redoubled efforts among hostile neighbours.

Through the sympathy of Cyrus, the Persian king who controlled Palestine at the time, the local governor, or satrap, assisted the Jews in laying the cornerstone of the new temple; but the half-breed Samaritan neighbours interrupted the formalities in their eager desire to have a share in the program. When the Persian local governor died all the elements of man and nature seemed to conspire to delay the temple building. Read Ezra, chapter 4.

The prophetic voice had been stilled for many years; and it was only natural to expect that the return of the Jews to Jerusalem would give birth to another oracle of God. Haggai trumpeted the clarion call of Jehovah and urged that religion be given its rightful place in the rebuilding process. In the face of the seemingly insurmountable difficulties, and despite the immediate needs of homes and bulwarks and places of business, the prophet made men see that the construction of a place of worship was fundamental. Religion must always be given its elemental place, or reconstruction will ever be in vain.

Compared with the magnificent poetry of Isaiah, the literary style of Haggai is prosaic and poor, but the messages are practical and urgent, directed with stinging power to men in the hour of crisis.

The first message is in 1: 1–15. There can be no false content with things as they are. To men who desire, in the face of economic pressure, to postpone

to more prosperous times the building of a temple, there will be no religion left for the future.

The second word, 2: 1–9, is one of cheer against false despair and despondency. "The silver and the gold are mine," saith the Lord, "and the latter glory shall be greater than the former."

The third word, 2: 10–19, is a warning against false expectation. The mere building of a temple will not purify life. Holiness is not contagious, but evil is contagious. Religion must express itself in purity.

The last word, 2:20–23, is pronounced against false fears. This is not the worst of all worlds; it can be improved and that is why we are in it.

Haggai's message may be briefly summarized: "Do not spend your life in self-seeking, beautifying and adorning your own home and neglecting the house of worship. Make the temple of God beautiful, that religion might have a worthy place of dignity in life."

Beauty is sadly lacking in many of our churches. So barnlike and stern and barren were many of our Puritan churches that some of us grew up thinking that everything beautiful belonged to the devil. And thus the Church has lost its grip on the stage, permitted Bohemianism to steal its artists, and allowed its great composers to live in an unspiritual world. We have not realized the place of beauty in the physical aspect of religion. We send our children to beautiful school buildings to learn arithmetic, and on Sunday we let them learn about Jesus Christ in a dark, shabby, back-room Sunday school. And the child draws his comparisons. Religion is the eternal

mother of the arts, and she needs to have her children live with her. Amid all our civic improvements, without either extravagance or waste, we do need a revival of beauty in our churches. God is the God of beauty, and we need the best that our arts can devise in the midst of our physical forms of worship.

QUESTIONS

Do you view with sympathy or alarm the building of great churches?

Does a church have to be massive or costly to be beautiful?

How can we again unite art and religion? How can we arouse a sense of the worshipful beauty of great music?

Ought the Church and the stage to be in conflict or co-operation? How?

Are the churches of your community such gems of beauty that your heart is lifted to God when you enter them? How can you beautify them?

"But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters' pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars, massy proof,
And storied windows, richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced choir below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may, with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies
And bring all heaven before mine eyes."

—MILTON.

XIV

ZECHARIAH, THE PROPHET OF RECONSTRUCTION

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."—MATTHEW 5: 9.

HAGGAI'S messages had met with a wide response on the part of his people when Zechariah's voice began to be heard. The book of Zechariah, as we have it to-day, was written by at least three or four different authors, two or three of whom probably added to, or commented on, the words of the original Zechariah. It is a book particularly rich in its promises of a coming Messiah who should personify the prophetic hopes of Israel.

In place of the unromantic prose of Haggai and Malachi, Zechariah's message of the basic place of religion in reconstruction is presented in the image-symbols, made popular by Ezekiel, and so appealing to the childlike Oriental mind. Zechariah proclaims the love of God for His people to whom neighbouring messengers had been maliciously pointing out the divine displeasure.

He visualized four horns of iron, the neighbouring powers, shattered by four smiths (1: 18–21). He portrayed a man with a measuring rod, deciding that it was unnecessary to measure the walls of Jerusalem,

for God is the defence thereof (2: 1–5). The filthy rags of the high priest are changed to rich apparel, signifying the pardon of God (3: 1–10). A seven-lamped chandelier is connected with giant olive trees, portraying the exhaustless resources of the Spirit (4: 1–14). A flying roll, with its curse on all law-breakers, scours the land (5: 1–4). Wickedness, as a woman in a measure, is banished from the land (5: 5–10). The four winds execute judgment on all who rejoice at the affliction of God's people (6: 1–8). Better days are coming. The culmination of dreams is reached when Zechariah pictures the crowning of the high priest as King, and the spirit of religion and government becomes one, and reigns in all life (6: 9–15).

Chapters 9 to 14 are evidently written by later authors, three or four in number, for the marked literary characteristics of the earlier chapters are gone and the political situation is entirely changed. Matthew 27: 9 seems to refer part of these later chapters to Jeremiah. But the theme of the whole book blends —the place of religion in reconstruction and in the new day.

There is only one way to secure permanent peace, and that way is the way of religion. The old order of things must go before war can go. The shepherds who feed on the flock, the men who profit by war, must be put aside and in their place we must have men who feed the flock (9: 9–17). The barbed-wire entanglements between nations must be cut down. Trust in one another must be the new rule of life. The way

to get peace is to remove the spirit of suspicion and hate from the hearts of men. We must think of individual men as human beings, and no longer deal with them in the mass. We must see to it that individual life is holy and righteous, until the pots on the stoves in the workingman's kitchen are just as holy as the communion cups on the altar, and the jingling bells on the harness of the horses of the political leaders have written on them: "Holy to the Lord" (14: 20–21). Men must come to the place where even the common, humdrum instruments of life have religious significance, and the thundering trucks, the roaring locomotives, and the chattering taxicabs are dedicated to God. Over our halls of trade, our stock markets and our legislative assemblies men must see the insignia of God.

The unknown prophet himself becomes a type of the Good Shepherd whose brief and rejected ministry is to be followed by betrayal, and who is to be sold at the price of a common slave, thirty pieces of silver (chapter 11). Through much tribulation and purifying judgment not only the Jewish nation, but the whole world, will at last find that the knowledge of God and the observance of His law are basic in reconstructing a demoralized and war-infested world. The better age will come with the Kingdom of God (14: 8).

We are rebuilding to-day in a significant way. The theories of trade and of government, the institutions of society, and even the old scientific terms have been shattered. But what are we rebuilding? During the gory World War we talked of the new era to come. Where is it? We spoke of the war to end war. What

are we doing to end war? How can we now reconstruct society to make it permanent, durable, foolproof and warproof?

Treaties of peace are worth while, but men scrap treaties of peace. We may outlaw war as we outlaw crime; but criminals are not deterred by outlawry. The sane way to rid the world of war is to proceed along the lines necessary in the prevention of epidemics of disease—cure the individual life and make the individual righteous; purify politics, business and social life, and teach men to love instead of hate. Religion must be basic, or we cannot build permanently. The humble things of life must become religiously significant.

Let us remember anew that Christ was born in a stable, that He was a peasant and a carpenter, that the ass, and the peasant's robes and the near-by palm branches of His triumphant entry were ordinary things glorified by Him, that the peasant's lunch of bread and wine is His memorial feast, and that the criminal's cross is the symbol of His kingdom. He saw God in the sparrow, the Kingdom of God in the woman making bread and in the man buying pearls. We, too, must make the commonplace, ordinary things of life holy and righteous in the new order before we can ever get permanent peace. Peace is a by-product of righteousness.

QUESTIONS

How can we make religion basic in our reconstruction days?
Is it possible to fill business and politics with the spirit of Christ?
Can a Christian believe in war?
What did Christ mean when He said: "Blessed are the peacemakers"?
Is it possible to have a war to end war? How can we best end war?

"The light of God is falling
Upon life's common way;
The Master's voice is calling:
'Come, walk with me to-day;'
No duty can seem lowly
To him who lives with Thee,
And all of life grows holy,
O Christ of Galilee.

"Who shares his life's pure pleasures
And walks the honest road,
Who trades with heaping measures,
And lifts his brother's load,
Who turns the wrong down bluntly
And lends the right a hand,
He dwells in God's own country,
He tills the Holy Land."

—Louis F. Benson.

XV

MALACHI, THE MOULDER OF TRUE RELIGION

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you."—JOHN 13: 34.

THE book of Malachi has a literary form peculiar to itself; for it is characterized by interrupting texts in the midst of logical passages, as if the audience, or a supposed adversary, interrupted with frank questions. This question and answer method of teaching, hitherto rare, becomes popular with Malachi. In Jesus' day this was the accepted method of teaching, and the record tells us of the boy Jesus in the temple, "hearing and asking questions." Six interrupting questions punctuate the message of Malachi. Read Malachi 1: 2; 1: 6; 1: 7; 2: 14; 2: 17; 3: 8.

The author of the book is unknown. But the fond hope of the Jews for a coming messenger of the Lord was so vivid, and the suggestions in the book so sympathetic to the popular hope, that the author came to be known as "Malachi," "My Messenger." 3: 1–3 and 4: 5–6 point definitely to the coming of a pathfinder.

The Jews who had returned to Jerusalem had by this time lost all trace of the exile, for their city had been rebuilt, and their age-old religious customs had

been revived. Their long Babylonian dreams had come true, and they were now established again in their native land; but the fulfillment of their dreams had brought disillusionment, until their earlier lofty enthusiasm had become cold. Despite the revival of the ritual of the temple, things had not prospered as they hoped; crops had been poor, and they were not materially so well off as their relatives who remained in Babylon. Religion had not made them any cash payments, and as the years went by they became sullen and careless of the better things in the midst of their drab surroundings.

The degenerate priests did not lead them, and the upkeep of the temple came to be widely neglected by the people. Indifference to spiritual values became universal. To the heartbreak of the Jewish women marriages with pagan women became common, moral standards were lowered, an open, almost arrogant, worldliness resulted, and a consequent pessimism, a spiritual dullness, was everywhere.

Then this unknown messenger of the Lord arose to fan the dying embers of faith into a bright religious flame, and to rekindle spiritual life in the hearts of his people. Not only by stern denunciation but by exquisite promises he came to lead them back to the honour and the service and the love of God which form the expression of true religion. True religion is based on the consciousness of the love of God for men, and of men for God and for one another. There can be no other foundations of the religious life. Chapter 1 of the book of Malachi shows that fear, and tradition

and a mere sense of duty cannot be foundations of religious life.

Love of God will result in a true and noble leadership among men, for in its dominant grace political leaders will not be satisfied with the contemptible lack of loyalty exhibited in men (1: 8–9). True religion will force political leaders to be the eternal and vigilant conscience of their people. Read 2: 5–9.

Under a common Father God men will have a new sense of human brotherhood which will manifest itself in a higher morality and a freedom from treachery and abomination, and men will think in terms of each other in a new forgiving spirit, kindly conduct and noble action. In the great testing experience which men will undergo when the messenger of the Lord truly comes into their lives men will find the future better than the past (3: 1–6).

Thus, when they learn to worship God aright, men will no longer rob God. When men adequately support the work of the Lord, and give the Lord's work a definite portion of their income, rich and immeasurable spiritual blessings will flow without measure; the windows of heaven will be opened, and blessings poured out beyond our capacity to receive. Read 3: 7–12, the culminating words of the prophet.

When religion is the vital experience it ought to be, it will no longer be possible to complain that there is no profit living the Godlike way; for the cleavage between the good and the bad is deep in life and, as the days pass, the difference between them becomes clearly discernible. It is not the size of the pay check that

makes life full to overflowing, but it is the intimacies of our personal contacts, especially our friendship with God (3: 16–18). For those who do not depend on merely material things to make them happy, life brings greater blessings as the days go by. To those who live with God life is a pleasant place, the future is ever bright, and no haunting fear ever paralyzes the soul (4: 2–3). "For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

Religion is manifested in conduct, and all conduct is built upon relationship; when we make that relationship loving kindness, and when we comprehend the vast benediction that love pours back upon us in return, we cannot help but propagate our religion and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers (4: 4–6).

In times of moral decadence and spiritual sloth we are inclined to think of religion as merely an adjunct of material comfort, and to argue for it or against it in terms of pay checks and premiums, stock values and wages, prosperity and comfort. Then we need to hark back to the words of Malachi, whose conception of true religion was very close to that of Jesus. If we could only take some of the energy we put into business and use it in loving service to God and to our neighbours, we would all be infinitely happier and better off! Jesus Himself defined true religion in similar terms: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." "Blessed [happy] are ye," He discovered, "if ye live this way."

QUESTIONS

Has your religion ever become purely perfunctory? How can you revive it?

In the midst of your prosperity have you ever "robbed God"? Have you ever made an "unworthy" offering?

Do you believe that the budgeting principle—the laying aside of a definite portion of your income, and time and talent—for the service of others is worth the effort?

If religion is not a mere form of belief or a ritual of action but a vital relationship, can it ever be a side issue in life?

Is true religion worth propagating? How can we propagate it?

"I live for those who love me,
For those who hold me true,
For the heaven that bends above me
And the good that I can do;
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that I can do."

—G. L. Banks.

XVI

JOEL, THE POET REVIVALIST

"I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."—MATTHEW 25: 35, 36, 40.

THE book of Joel is a dramatic poem, an imaginative prophecy disconnected with any time or place. It is more akin to our modern oratorio, or imaginative religious opera, than to anything else in modern lore. Only two facts of actual life appear in the book; in the first part an irresistible plague of locusts is the physical background of the poet's message, and in the second part of the book the historic battlefield, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, is the poetic link with actual life. Since the book is imaginative, problems of time and place cannot enter into its discussion. The poetic message lies solely in the text.

It is interesting to note, however, that the interest is confined to Judea, that the people are mainly agricultural, that the temple is standing, the fast is highly regarded, and community religion is strong. Redemption is a materialistic deliverance from physical ills, and prosperity is expected to return with religious revival.

The book is written for public recitation, and is formed of seven equal parts, which create a perfect literary arch, with the fourth part as capstone. Its author was a poet, rather than a prophet, who believed that poverty must be wiped out before piety can begin.

The seven messages are in vision form, akin to the symbols of Ezekiel. Various choruses and groups sing and recite to each other in oratorio form. In the first chapter, for example, verses 2 to 4 are spoken or sung by the women, 5–7 by the revellers, 8–10 by the priests, 11–12 by husbandmen, 13 by the priests, and from 14 to the end by the whole people.

Chapter 1 is the dramatic picture of a land mourning under a locust plague, a symbol of coming judgment. The plague becomes one of horsemen advancing in mystic judgment (2: 1–2).

The third word is a call to honest and sincere repentance for broken economic laws (2: 12–17). Verses 12 and 13 in chapter 2 form one of the most stirring appeals. Verses 15–16 are sung by the people, and 17 by the priests.

In the climax of the book (2: 17–27) relief and restoration are promised and the mystic foes removed. Want and famine and suffering shall disappear from the land, and the decay of the past shall be overcome with health and vigour.

Although we cannot look upon natural happenings as direct punishment of God, we do need to take a spiritual view of nature. We can make people more sympathetic to religion if we first clean up the slums

and give them better living conditions, purify the factory surroundings and make working conditions more sanitary, and see that there is a more even distribution of justice. Read 2: 25–26.

As a result of the application of the principles of justice, there will be a new democracy in which the spiritual blessings, hitherto awarded to priests and prophets and kings alone, shall be given to all men, until our old men dream dreams and our young men see visions (2: 28–31). Our ability to make life better depends upon our dreams and visions. And, as a result, the nations of the world shall come to the great battlefield of Judea, not to fight, but to be judged. Oppressors and unjust dealers will be removed from them and God shall dwell in the land. Out of the "valley of decision" shall come permanent peace (3: 9–21). In chapter 3, verse 11 is spoken, or sung, by sundry voices, 14–16 by the prophet and spectators, and the other verses by the Lord.

We need this uniquely pertinent message of Joel. We cannot expect material luxury and vast prosperity as a reward of religion; but we cannot expect a revival of real religion, the Spirit of God in the most humble hearts, until we honestly apply a Godlike love to living conditions, and see that there is a square deal in life. When a man is starving, a loaf of bread will make him more amenable to religion than an orthodox sermon. Men will not think straight when they are the victims of injustice. The Trotzkys who live in our East Side slums are not inclined to go back to Russia to preach a revival of the religion they found in

America. Many a young girl has been led off the straight path because her employer, an active church member, paid her a starvation wage. A square deal in the business world will do more to win a man to God than a printed tract or an evangelistic campaign. We need to rend *our* hearts and get rid of *our* economic hypocrisies and *our* lack of justice. When we begin our religious revival with an honest application of the principles of Christ to economic and political conditions, the revival which will ensue will be thoroughgoing. Policeman and politician, bank porter and president, shoeblack and surgeon will dream their dreams and see their visions, linking God to their daily tasks. Our sons and our daughters, whose conduct often worries us, will be prophets of God in their own right, and the peace of God will possess the land.

QUESTIONS

Is there any parallel between Joel's message and Jesus' stories of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25–37) and the Judgment (Matthew 25: 31–45)?

How can we begin a revival of true religion in our social life to-day?

Do you believe that calamities lose their sting when men lose their selfishness and help one another? Can you illustrate?

Have we been inclined to put too much emphasis on dogma and not enough on the application of the principles of Jesus to life?

Why are many labour unions critical of the Church founded by Jesus, the Carpenter? How can we change their attitude?

"Where the many toil together, there am I among mine own;
Where the tired workman sleepeth, there am I with him alone.

"I, the peace that passeth knowledge, dwell amid the daily strife;
I, the bread of heaven am broken in the sacrament of life.

"Every task, however simple, sets the soul that does it free;
Every deed of love and mercy done to man is done to Me.

"Nevermore thou needest seek Me; I am with thee everywhere;
Raise the stone, and thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood, and I am there!"

—HENRY VAN DYKE.[1]

[1] Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

XVII

JONAH, THE UNWILLING MISSIONARY

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd."—JOHN 10: 16.

THE book of Jonah is unique among the prophetic books, for it is not so much a prophecy as a depiction of a reluctantly given prophetic message, the story of a moral and a spiritual lesson, and a vivid portrayal of the true character of God. Jonah is not the author, but the central figure of the book, a narrow-minded bigot who carries the message of a just, patient, big-hearted God, is afraid to deliver the message to Nineveh and is unwilling to accept it for himself.

Sundry difficulties in the book have led us to miss its divine message in the heat of the argument over minor matters of form and expression. It has too often become the story of a big fish, instead of a picture of the merciful God, a biological wrangle instead of a missionary message. We have forgotten that God, and not the " whale," is the central figure of the tale.

There are several facts to be noted about the story of the fish. In Jonah's prayer of thanksgiving, he speaks of escape from immersion in the sea (2: 5). Stories of similar escapes from great fish are widely current along the coast of Palestine. The author uses

a commonly told story to illustrate his case. The book is a poetic allegory in prose form, not to be taken literally in every detail, but emphasizing a central message. Jesus, who also spoke poetically, followed a similar principle when He said of the Pharisees: "Ye strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!" It is just as foolish to attempt to prove the divine significance of Jesus' teaching by discovering a man whose throat is big enough to swallow a camel, as to try to prove the message of Jonah by finding a fish whose throat is big enough to swallow a man. The author speaks in parables to teach his divine lesson.

No strict Puritan was ever so rigid in his religious standards of compelled conformity as were the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from captivity. Out of their bitter experiences with other nations they came to look upon God as their own personal possession, and Judea as the only possible dwelling place of God on earth. They could not think of religion apart from race. To the Jew God owed nothing to any one but the Jews; He was a purely national God.

To Jonah, a typical Jew, there came a call to world evangelization. The call was so different from Jonah's conception of God that he strove to escape it. He could speak to Nineveh of a God of revenge, but not of a God of mercy. He decided that he would not speak repentance and forgiveness to an enemy people. Read Jonah 1: 1–17. Amid the agonies of storm at sea he even refused to pray with the sailors on the ship who did not conceive of God as he did. When lots were cast, and he was chosen as the cause of the storm,

he confessed that he was fleeing from his God. He was thrown overboard; and the call to world evangelization was disobeyed at his own peril.

The second chapter contains Jonah's prayer of thanksgiving for deliverance. Many of the expressions are from the later Psalms.

But he was no sooner delivered from the sea than the same relentless call came again. Go where he would, he could not escape it (3: 1–2). Francis Thompson depicts the pursuing, gnawing call of duty vividly in his "Hound of Heaven." We cause ourselves untold suffering trying to escape duty; and in the end we never escape it.

So Jonah went to Nineveh and began his preaching, a lone missionary proclaiming a coming judgment with keen zest (3: 3–4). To his great astonishment, his stern words of judgment brought forth fruits of repentance all over Nineveh, from the peasant's hovel to the king's palace. And then, like a lightning flash from the blue, the conviction came to the amazed Jonah that God was actually going to be merciful to these Gentiles! The discovery that God could actually love people not of the elect was too much for Jonah. Nothing staggers a man quite so much as the discovery that God is bigger, broader, and kinder than he thought He was.

Traditional Jonah felt that the bottom had dropped out of things. He had reasoned that a flight to Tarshish would take him out of reach of the power of God; and now he had reasoned that a trip to Nineveh would take him out of reach of the mercy of God. He

was mistaken again (4: 1–5). He had no comprehension of the wonderful power of true repentance. He sulked, and was angry, and begged God to let him die. It is easier to die, sometimes, than to change your religious conceptions.

Outside the city, in the torrid sun, he made himself a shade from a living vine, the only comfort he knew, to which he became greatly attached. These little earthly attachments which mean so much to us ought to suggest the vital devotion and unwavering love God has, not merely for inanimate things, but for His children of every race and tribe and creed. God sent a worm and the vine died. In sheer rage Jonah fainted; and God, merciful to the proud Pharisee no less than to the trembling sinners of Nineveh, patiently rebuked him (4: 5–11).

The Jew conceived of a God who was arbitrary in His judgment of evil, and ruthless in His punishment of sin; but the author of Jonah reveals a God who is tender and kind, whose great pity includes not only the innocent children in the great city, but even embraces the dumb cattle incapable of wrong. The Jew worshipped a God who was considerate to the righteous, and vengeful to the sinful, but the author of Jonah pictures a God who has tender compassion even for sinners, who is not eager to condemn men, but who is anxious to save them.

" For the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind;

But we make His love too narrow with false limits all our own,
And we magnify His strictness with a zeal He will not own."

The picture of God in Jonah is the God of Jesus. Read Jesus' answer to the taunt of the Pharisees: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" (Luke, chapter 15).

The book of Jonah closes with the picture of a great city, not of buildings and boulevards, but of men, and women, and little children as "sheep without a shepherd." Some day we, too, will learn to think in such terms; not of China, but of the Chinese, not of Mexico, but of Mexicans.

If our conception of God is what it ought to be, the loving Father of all people, then we shall learn anew that the call to tell God's lost children of His love is a relentless call that is literally unescapable. We must share God, or we cannot keep Him. Love cannot be selfish.

People who do not believe in world evangelization reveal their own Jonah-mindedness; the trouble lies in their own puny, narrow conception of God. The moment we conceive of a world Fatherhood, that moment we must have a passion for world brotherhood. The moment we know God as the kind Father of sinners, the loving friend of even wayward sons, that moment the missionary urge will sweep through our souls anew with compelling force.

QUESTIONS

In our theological wrangles and our dogmatic creeds have we sufficiently emphasized the merciful Fatherhood of God?

Are we like Jonah, shirking duty, belittling God, and refusing to acknowledge His universal love?

Have we ever been inclined to worship a merely national or racial God?

Does it mean anything to you that in the book of Jonah the heathen sailors and people of Nineveh are represented in a more favourable light than the man who was supposed to know the true God?

What is the proper motive of Christian missions? Will the Christian Church ever be able to stop sending out missionaries?

"Oh, grant us love like Thine,
That hears the cry of sorrow
From heathendom ascending to the throne of God;
That spurns the call of ease and home,
While Christ's lost sheep in darkness roam!

"Oh, grant us hearts like Thine,
Wide, tender, faithful, childlike,
That seek no more their own, but live to do Thy will!
The hearts that seek Thy kingdom first,
Nor linger while the people thirst.

"Oh, grant us minds like Thine,
That compassed all the nations,
That swept o'er land and sea and loved the least of all;
Great things attempting for the Lord,
Expecting mighty things from God."

—ANONYMOUS.

XVIII

JOB, THE DISCOVERER OF GOD IN HUMAN SUFFERING

"Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me."—JOHN 14: 1.

"In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—JOHN 16: 33.

THE book of Job is one of the masterpieces of all literature, "one of the grandest poems ever written by man." With all the genius of dramatic art, it deals resolutely with the problem of human pain and suffering.

The doctrine of suffering common to the early Jews and to some of us to-day was the belief that pain is the whip used by God to punish us for sin, and that the greater the suffering, the greater the sin. The disciples clung to this belief, and asked Jesus about it (John 9: 2).

The message of the book of Job is not to be found either in its geographical or historical background, but in its dramatic appeal. The earthly scenes of the drama are pictured idealistically in the highest developed pastoral life, in which the patriarchs touched the whole gamut of human experience, and lived amid agricultural and commercial prosperity. The whole

range of literary expression pictures the wide expanse of human experience.

The scene of the dramatic prologue alternates between the throne room of heaven and the dwelling place of Job on earth. The narrated story at the beginning and the end of the book is in prose, with one slight trace of a stage direction in the center of the book. The rest of the book is poetry.

In the court of high heaven the Lord cites Job as an example of true faith, but the Satan, the tester of men, suggests that Job is faithful merely because he is prosperous. Read chapters 1 and 2. Job's prosperity is taken away in a dire calamity. The Satan suggests that Job is still faithful because he is healthy. The Lord gives permission to take away Job's health. Job, totally dejected, still refuses to renounce God, but the baffling mystery of his unreasonable loss of prosperity and health overwhelms him. "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Recently a picture of prosperity, health, and buoyant happiness, Job is now the epitome of poverty, pain, and dejection. He sits on an ash heap against the background of former glory, and silent spectators pass by, sigh, beat their breasts, and whisper the news of the tragedy to others. In all the pomp of their buoyant health and abundant prosperity, his friends arrive to comfort him. They sit in an accusing silence. Job, conscious of their opinion that he has greatly sinned and thus has invited this great suffering, is roused by their sense of superiority and their open insinuations.

He can keep silence no longer. He chants a funeral dirge, cursing the day in which he was born. Read chapter 3. To his orthodox friends this is rank heresy.

The debate begins. Eliphaz, the oldest, calmly intellectual, ultra-orthodox to the point of prejudice, cold and unsympathetic, speaks first. He emphasizes the old doctrine that suffering comes from sin, and quotes a dream to show how superior God is to sinful man (chapters 4 and 5).

Job, as if speaking to himself, justifies his former words. He does not think much of friends who come to comfort and who remain to accuse. He appeals to God against the persecution, and brokenheartedly cries for pardon (chapters 6 and 7).

Bildad, the second friend, a strong believer in precedent and tradition, in the wisdom and in the formulæ of the good old days, is suspicious of all new thoughts and new ideas. Anything new to him, especially Job's new thought, is false and dangerous. Yet he strives to present a ray of hope to Job (chapter 8).

Job answers in a more tender mood: "If I could find my way to God I could present my case. O for a Mediator!" He appeals to God against the unrelenting severity of suffering, and again begs to die (chapters 9 and 10).

Zophar, the third friend, is very practical, but is inclined to be wordy and dogmatic. He holds to the traditional view that sin brings suffering to a man, and urges Job to submit to God (chapter 11).

Under the stress of these words Job becomes peevish, and speaks sarcastically: "No doubt ye are the people,

and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you have." He bluntly denies the traditional doctrine, pointing to wicked men who never suffer (chapters 12 to 14).

The first round of the debate thus ends with Job flatly refusing to accept the old traditional argument for the origin of pain, and clinging to his new opinion that might is not right with God. To his friends' appeal to the intellect in age-old arguments he declares his unwillingness to accept standardized dogma which does not fit experience. He will do his own thinking.

Having failed to cure Job of the heresy of thinking for himself, the friends decide that his trouble is not intellectual, but moral. In the second round of speeches the friends interrupt each other in their intensity, and support their views by rhetoric. When they point their finger of scorn at Job, he feels that both man and God accuse him falsely without a trial.

Eliphaz accuses Job of being a wind bag, who has no right to think contrary to the best thoughts of an aged tradition. No man born of woman is clean (chapter 15).

Job, contemptuous of his friends, is bitter in his loneliness and crushed by isolation. Wearily he utters his honest complaints, and pours out his tears to God for restoration (chapter 16).

Bildad rebukes Job's contempt, and points to the universal law of punishment. If Job is being punished, he did it himself, and he can blame himself (chapter 18).

Job, in sheer misery, believes that maybe God will

hear him, after all, but hearing him, will not necessarily give him fair play. Suddenly, while in the darkness of his lowest depths, a lightning streak of truth sweeps across his soul, and he sings a new song of sublime beauty: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Read 19: 23–27. He becomes calm, and faints, to revive into despondence again (chapter 19).

Zophar, angry, rebukes Job, and points to the picture of life's distresses, the moral law of retribution. It is all Job's fault (chapter 20).

Job, confused after the sudden illumination of faith, expresses his continued doubt of the friends' doctrine, and suggests that the escape of the wicked from punishment is more universal than the suffering of the wicked for their deeds (chapter 21).

In the first cycle of the debate the friends were unable to dominate Job's intellect and to smother his thinking; so, in the second round of the debate, the friends were unable to dictate to Job's conscience. As Job established the right to do his own thinking, so he now establishes the right to make his own moral judgments. He has now won both freedom of intellect and freedom of conscience.

Eliphaz begins the third round of the debate by reiterating the old arguments, and insisting that Job's only hope lies in blind submission. He lists a catalogue of sins which might have been Job's (chapter 22).

Job cries for a Vindicator: "O that I knew where I might find him!" He pictures the social sins of life: "From out of the populous city men groan." Maybe the friends are right, and sin is always punished; but

it does not seem to be that way in actual life (chapters 23–24). Many guilty escape, and many innocent suffer.

Bildad suggests that God is so far beyond us that we have no right to question Him (chapter 25).

Job waxes sarcastic about the friends' lack of help, while they talk of power. He believes in the power of God; it is the justice of God which baffles him (chapter 26).

Zophar, hearing the common sense of Job, is silent.

Job falls back to his formal, traditional manner, portrays a happy old man in utter contrast to himself, and repeats the old formulæ which slip glibly off his lips without thinking. He disclaims the sin of which he is suspected (chapters 27–31).

Elihu, a young man who has remained silent out of respect to his elders, is constrained to enter the debate: "There is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." He attacks both the friends and Job, and becomes dogmatic in his nervousness. Job cannot say that God does not answer men; God is answering men in a variety of ways. Job dare not accuse God of injustice; he ought to be punished until he stops rebelling. Job is wrong—righteousness is more profitable than sin. Finally Elihu makes his great contribution—that calamity is a warning and a way of discipline (chapters 32 to 37). Meanwhile a great storm has gathered, and Elihu speaks in terms of the storm (chapter 37).

The traditionary explanations of suffering have ended in darkness and storm, and Job is literally groping for

light. Through the claps of thunder and the bursting whirlwind, in nature itself, Job hears the voice of God. Like some master artist, proud to show his friends the creative work of his hands, Jehovah brings before the eyes of Job a magnificent panorama of the universe (read 38: 1–21), the sheer beauty of which is as suggestive as the argument. Not until mere man sees life in its full perspective, as God sees it, can he make a proper judgment (chapters 38–39).

Job surrenders when God plaintively asks: "Will you condemn me to justify yourself?" Read 40: 3–5. Job is awed into true reverential humility by his vivid experience of the mystic presence of God.

Narrating the story of the greatness of God, the voice of the whirlwind gradually dies away (chapters 40 and 41).

And Job, now knowing God in experience, and not merely in theological theory, sees God Himself, sees life in a new perspective (read 42: 1–6), until that which seemed at close vision to be but a hopeless smear becomes, at proper perspective, an orderly and beautiful thing. When men find God, and get to know Him personally, the answers to life's riddles are discovered by faith.

The drama closes with a brief epilogue in prose (42: 7–15). The friends are ordered to make sacrifice for their error in failing to see life as it really is, and Job is ordered to intercede for them as the curtain of a renewed prosperity falls upon the scene.

The drama suggests five solutions to the problem of pain and suffering:

1. Suffering is a test of goodness, and the stronger the character, the more severe the test.

2. All suffering in general is a result of sin, ofttimes of some one else's sin.

3. Suffering is a warning, sent to men to adjust their lives, that they might escape heavier spiritual judgments.

4. The whole universe is beyond the puny understanding of men. We cannot master the physical problems of life, let alone the deeper spiritual mysteries. As Jesus said to Nicodemus: "If I told you earthly things and you cannot comprehend them, how could you understand if I told you heavenly things?"

5. The right attitude towards suffering is one of bold and inquiring faith, rather than a cringing attempt to gear life into worn out dogmas. God does not answer our arguments and questions with intellectual logic, but by flooding our inner beings with a new light. We cannot explain, and we do not always understand, but somehow we learn to say in the dark valleys: "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

We must begin any survey of the problem of evil and of pain with the acknowledgment of man's highest heritage, the freedom given him to do as he pleases. We are social beings, dependent on one another. The innocent often inherit the benefit of other men's good deeds, and often suffer from other men's evil deeds. That inheritance is the price of our freedom. To do away with that inheritance we must do away with our

freedom, or become isolated, divorced, and segregated from all men. If this innocent child is the diseased victim of a hard-hearted landlord, or if that innocent child is the victim of another's lustful disease, let us remember also that there was One who was "wounded for our transgressions, by whose stripes we are healed." Pain is not a pleasant thing, but pain is a thing with a meaning. The more highly developed our moral character becomes, with its sympathy and sensitiveness, the sharper pain becomes. The finest moral character who ever trod this earth was precisely for that reason "the Man of Sorrows."

That there is injustice in life we cannot deny. But man, not God, is the source of the injustice. Life is not all physical. Ofttimes those who do suffer discover hidden meanings in life that those who escape sufferings never dreamed of. Joyce Kilmer was right:

"They shall not live who have not tasted death;
They only sing who are struck dumb by God."

Pain is a tragedy, and no intellectual explanation can soften the tragedy. In it there is nothing to say but this—God is love, God is our Father, and when we suffer, God suffers, too. You have a right to arraign a God who sits off from life and permits innocent people to suffer; but when you discover that God is not off from life, but *in* life, not merely in physical nature, but in *human* nature, and that He actually suffers with us when we suffer—that is entirely different! We cannot explain away suffering, but in suffering we can find God intimately.

QUESTIONS

Is there any danger in striving to make the facts of modern life fit the old dogmas of theology? Is it dangerous to teach people to think for themselves?

In your own experience, or in the experience of those around you, has suffering been a spiritual blessing or a curse?

In the light of the teachings of Jesus Christ, how would you comfort a modern Job?

Will it ever be possible to remove all suffering from the world?

In what moments of your life have you come to know God most intimately and to feel His presence to be most real?

"In the bitter waves of woe,
Beaten and tossed about
By the sullen winds that blow
From the desolate shores of doubt,
Where the anchors that faith had cast
Are dragging in the gale,
I am quietly holding fast
To things that cannot fail.

"And fierce though the fiends may fight,
And long though the angels hide,
I know that truth and right
Have the universe on their side;
And somewhere beyond the stars
Is a Love that is better than hate,
And when night unlocks her bars,
I shall see Him—so I will wait."

—WASHINGTON GLADDEN.

Printed in the United States of America

BIBLE CHARACTER STORIES

WILLIAM FORD MANLEY

Bible Dramas

Radio Dramalogues adopted for Church and Social Gatherings. **$2.00**

These plays based on Bible characters, successfully produced over the radio, are now offered to Churches, societies and fraternal organizations for amateur production. The "Production Suggestions" are simple and clear, and are just what is needed to make the presentation of each play a delight to the characters and to the audience. The dramas are quite out of the ordinary; they contrive to get far beneath the surface, and uncover depths of motive, of atmosphere and of dramatic and spiritual power.

WILLIAM J. MAY

Bible Character Stories

Illustrated, $1.75

Here is the human side of the leading characters of the older Bible stories. From "The Beginnings of Human Nature" in the Garden of Eden to the time when Moses, afront the Promised Land, faced the God from whom he never more was to part, Dr. May's volume of Bible tales consistently clarifies and illumines the human faults and fancies, ambitions and achievements of Bible men and women.

LIFE OF PAUL

CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY, D.D.

Paul the Man

His Life, Message and Ministry. **$2.00**

Dr. Macartney writes of St. Paul as only an earnest, sympathetic friend could picture him. He shows the apostle as a man among men, quick to understand and deal with every situation. Dr. Macartney has an intimate, convincing manner of presentation. As one reviewer recently said: "His pen seems to be a plough running deep furrows through the soil of historic records; again it is an instrument of illumination, lighting up areas that have before lain in the shadow."

BIBLICAL HISTORY

IRA MAURICE PRICE, Ph.D.

The Dramatic Story of Old Testament History

Profusely Illustrated, many maps. **$3.50**

Though it covers the whole period, it is not an outline, or a mere syllabus like Dr. Price's former work in this field; it is a recital, a graphic survey of events, movements, and persons from Adam to Alexander and from Cain to Judas Maccabæus.

ANDREW W. BLACKWOOD, D.D.

Bible History: Genesis to Esther

Popular Studies in the Old Testament.

With Ten Pages of Charts, **$1.50**

A concise popular interpretation of the narrative books of the Old Testament. Like its companion volume, "The Prophets: Elijah to Christ," it reveals the freshness, vitality and eternal values of Old Testament literature.

RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY

HENRY KALLOCH ROWE, Ph.D.

Modern Pathfinders of Christianity

The Lives and Deeds of Seven Centuries of Christian Leaders. **$2.00**

Stories of such men as Francis of Assisi, John Calvin, John Wesley, Moody, Rauschenbusch and sixteen others, are told in vivid, informing and stimulating manner. Teachers, pastors and all people interested in religious education will find these lives of interest and inspiration.

THE MOSLEM PROBLEM

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER, F.R.G.S.

Across the World of Islam

Aspects of the Mohammedan Faith and the Awakening of the Moslem Multitudes.

Abundantly Illustrated, **$4.00**

Story, tragedy and problem as witnessed by Dr. Zwemer from Cairo to Casablanca, from Capetown to Calcutta—the fascination, desperate need and marvellous awakening life of Islam on almost every continent. For travel, missionary or general religious interest, of marked and timely significance.

F. B. MEYER, D.D.

The Call and Challenge of the Unseen — $1.75

Ever since the days of his successful ministry in Leicester, Englnd, Dr. Meyer has held a unique place in the esteem of his fellow-countrymen, as well as Christians in America and elsewhere, who have adopted him for their own. These chapters epitomize many of the truths which have constituted his testimony in many lands.

T. C. HORTON, D.D.

The Potency of Prayer

A Handbook on Prayer for the Everyday Christian. $1.75

A book on how to pray, is reverent, devout, and eminently practical. Realizing the importance of a constant contact with the forces of power which prayer affords, Dr. Horton, Superintendent Emeritus of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, sets forth man's need of prayer, and the most potent means of satisfying it.

HERMAN PAUL GUHSE

A Book of Invocations for Use Throughout the Year

Introduction by Harry Emerson Fosdick. $1.00

Scores of Invocation prayers for use in Church services, Sunday Schools, missionary meetings and other Christian gatherings.

"The prayers all breathe a spirit of true devotion, and are couched in choice language. They will serve as an aid either in public services or in private devotions."—*Record of Christian Work.*

BYRON HOOVER DeMENT, D.D., LL.D.

The Bible Readers' Life of Christ

$2.50

An interpretative account of the words and works of Jesus based on the Gospel harmony. This simply expressed, comprehensive and yet concise work is of extreme value to theological seminaries, Bible Institutes, Sunday Schools and other institutions needing a clear and connected Life of Christ.

A. EARL KERNAHAN, D.D.

Author of "Visitation Evangelism"

Adventures in Visitation Evangelism

$1.50

This is a book of results. It presents actual experiences in the use of the now well-known Visitation Evangelism principle, projected on a large scale in such cities as Pittsburgh and New York, resulting in the winning of nearly 160,000 persons in the past four years. How and why the triumphs of the remarkable campaign in New York City in 1928 were attained, is brought out graphically and convincingly, as well as the intimation that what thus has already been done can be achieved by other churches, church workers and cities also.

JOHN F. COWAN, D.D.

New Youth Evangelism

A Challenge for To-day. **$1.50**

A ringing challenge to the youth of the country for personal evangelism. Dr. Cowan in this new book gives sound suggestions as to the "how," "when," and "where" of evangelism. All religious educators, as well as the young men and women to whom the book is addressed will find this broad and comprehensive work invaluable.

CHARLES FORBES TAYLOR

The Gospel Wagon

A Recital Of the Making Of An Evangelist. **$1.00**

With his father and his brother, Mr. Taylor early took part in evangelistic work, the three using as their base of operations what the people called a "Gospel Wagon." The inspiration and experience of those early days brought to him his "Boy Evangelist" title by the time he was nine years old, and eventually led him to America and to the well-known campaigns, which he has been carrying on in this country. The book is rich in incident, illustration and inspiration.

DATE DUE

NOV 3 0 1984

FEB 1 1985

FEB 2 2 1985

MAR 2 2 1985

APR 1 1 '85

NOV 2 0 1992

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

224
H1990
Hanzshe
The Oracles of God

33930

BS
1505
H25

BS1505 H25 Hanzsche, William Thomson
The oracles of God;
0 0000 00055476 9
Gardner-Webb University Library